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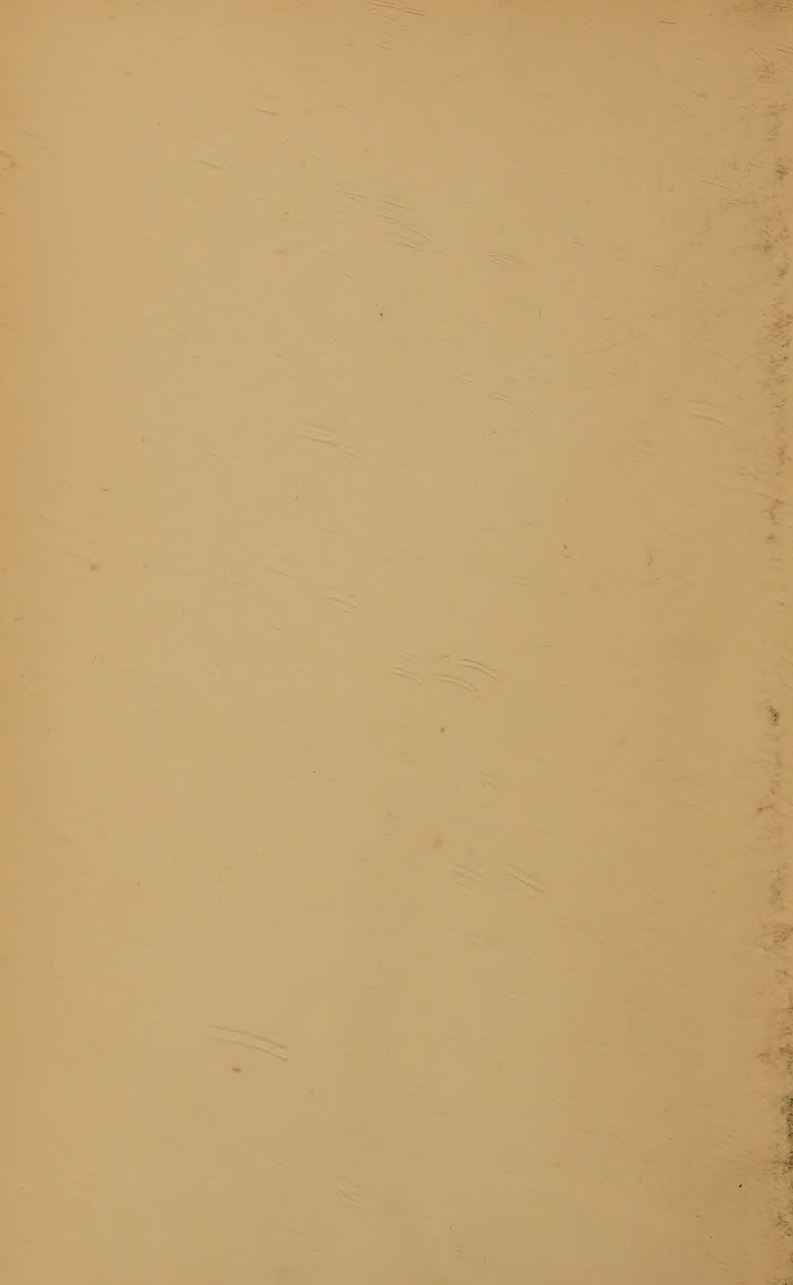
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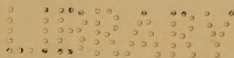
BY

CUNNINGHAM GEIKIE, D.D., LL.D.

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P R E F A C E

“WHAT we want more than anything,” said a friend to me, “is a Short Life of Christ which even a busy man may find enough minutes of leisure to read; a book showing Our Blessed Lord as he moved among men; its local colouring making it interesting, and its adequate knowledge of the people and the times making it reliable.”

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The many photograph and other illustrations were, in great part, taken when I revisited Palestine last year.

CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
I. THE BIRTH-LAND OF CHRIST	1
II. MARY AND ELIZABETH	6
III. THE BIRTH OF CHRIST AT BETHLEHEM	14
IV. THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE	21
V. THE VISIT OF THE MAGI	25
VI. CHRIST'S BOYHOOD, AND FIRST VISIT TO JERUSALEM	32
VII. THE INCIDENTS OF CHRIST'S FIRST PASSOVER.	42
VIII. CHRIST'S EARLY MANHOOD AT NAZARETH	47
IX. THE PREACHING OF JOHN THE BAPTIST	54
X. THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST, AND JOHN'S CAPTIVITY AND DEATH	71
XI. THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST	82
XII. THE BEGINNING OF CHRIST'S PUBLIC WORK	89
XIII. CHRIST AT CANA: THE LAKE OF GALILEE AND THE PEOPLE OF THE DISTRICT	98
XIV. CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE AND MEETING WITH NICODEMUS	112
XV. THE SAMARITAN WOMAN AT JACOB'S WELL	118
XVI. CHRIST'S LIFE AT CAPERNAUM	127
XVII. A MISSIONARY CIRCUIT, AND RETURN TO THE LAKE	137
XVIII. CHOICE OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES, AND THE SER- MON ON THE MOUNT	148
XIX. CHRIST AND THE SABBATH LAWS	160

CHAP.	PAGE
XX. THE GROWING OPPOSITION OF THE RABBIS . . .	171
XXI. MINGLED LIGHT AND CLOUDS	182
XXII. GALILEE—PHENICIA—CÆSAREA PHILIPPÆ . . .	195
XXIII. THE TRANSFIGURATION—THE TRIBUTE MONEY— COUNSELS	212
XXIV. TO JERUSALEM ONCE MORE	221
XXV. AMONG FRIENDS AT BETHANY.	229
XXVI. JOURNEYING TOWARDS JERUSALEM.	241
XXVII. DAILY LIFE OF JESUS	256
XXVIII. PALM SUNDAY	275
XXIX. TUESDAY IN HOLY WEEK	290
XXX. TUESDAY IN HOLY WEEK—(<i>continued</i>) . . .	302
XXXI. WEDNESDAY AND THURSDAY IN HOLY WEEK .	312
XXXII. GETHSEMANE AND THE BETRAYAL.	330
XXXIII. THE JEWISH TRIAL—THE DENIAL	344
XXXIV. BEFORE PILATE	355
XXXV. CALVARY	376
XXXVI. THE RESURRECTION	396

FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS

BETHLEHEM—THE TERRACED HILL	<i>To face page</i>	18
A SHEPHERD WITH HIS FLOCK, NEAR JERICHO	„ „	22
HIPPICUS (the last remaining of Herod's castles, Jerusalem)	„ „	44
VIEW ON PLAIN OF JERICHO	„ „	64
THE DEAD SEA	„ „	75
THE HILLS OF JUDÆA FROM THE PLAIN OF Jericho—Quarantania	„ „	83
TEL HÛM (the site of Capernaum?)	„ „	107
PEASANT WOMAN AND CHILDREN (such as the Pharisees reckoned "Accurst")	„ „	124
WAYSIDE WELL, ON THE OLD JERICHO ROAD	„ „	175
A GATHERING OF ORIENTALS	„ „	178
TENT LIFE IN THE EAST	„ „	223
BETHANY	„ „	231
THE TRADITIONAL INN OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN	„ „	233
VIEW FROM MOUNT OF OLIVES, TOWARDS Bethlehem	„ „	312
DAMASCUS GATE, JERUSALEM (the Gate Gennath)	„ „	379

ILLUSTRATIONS IN THE TEXT

	PAGE
NAZARETH	4
THE GOLDEN CANDLESTICK (from a relief in Tiberias) .	10
GOLD DARIC OF AUGUSTUS	15
TIBERIAS, AND THE LAKE OF GALILEE	33
GIRL OF NAZARETH	38
EASTERN KHANS	52
THE SEA OF GALILEE, LOOKING NORTH FROM KAUKAB EL HAWA (Lieut.-Colonel Conder, R.E.)	106
SKIN WATER-BOTTLES (the same kind of bottle as used for wine, oil, milk, and other things)	110
JEWISH SHEKEL	113
JACOB'S WELL, AS IT USED TO BE	121
THE ROLL OF THE SAMARITAN PENTATEUCH AND ITS COVER	134
PHYLACTERIES.	156
MALE DANCERS (Lieut.-Colonel Conder, R.E.)	169
THE GIFT OF A CUP OF COLD WATER	175
SIDON	201
THE VILLAGE OF SILOAM	226
TRICLINIUM	321
GETHSEMANE AT THE PRESENT DAY	336
ROCK TOMBS	393

A SHORT LIFE OF CHRIST

CHAPTER I

THE BIRTH-LAND OF CHRIST

THE coast of the Holy Land of Bible times began where the shore of the Mediterranean bends north from Egypt, and it reached from that point to Sidon; but the Jews never got possession of the shore, except here and there, for a short time, and had to live in the hilly country behind. We might think that a region so famous must have been large and important in itself, but small countries have often played a great part in history. England is very small, yet it has filled a wonderful part in the story of the world. Greece was very small, and yet has left a mighty name among the nations; and Rome, which ruled the earth for centuries, was only a city on the banks of the yellow Italian Tiber. Similarly the Holy Land is just about the size of Wales, its greatest length being only about 160 miles, while it is but twenty miles broad on the north and forty on the south. Like Wales, too, it is nearly all hills. Seen from off the coast, say at Joppa, a rolling plain stretches away ten or fifteen miles to these, which rise in the background like a wall.

Along the coast the soil is everywhere comparatively rich. From below Gaza, northward, to Joppa, it used to be called the Philistine plain, but that people had been destroyed long before Christ, though their name still survives,—for ‘Palestine’ is derived from ‘Philistine.’ North of Joppa, the land back to the hills was called

the plain of Sharon—famous in ancient times for its pastures, and for its oaks and olives and fruit trees, and everywhere farmed in the days of our Lord.

The foot hills rising from these plains are now almost without inhabitants, though a few villages, mostly of mud houses, are scattered very thinly. In the time of our Lord, however, the whole country was filled with people: every part abounding in ruins of what were then busy communities. Till the last few years there had been no roads for ages, but when Christ lived Roman highways, paved with blocks of stone, ran in all directions, and numerous aqueducts led fertilising waters to all parts. All kinds of fruit grew in one district or other. The palm-tree yielded dates nearly as far north as Gaza, and grew freely, though without bearing fruit, along the whole coast, and even in sheltered places inland, as it still does at Jerusalem and near Nazareth. The fig, the olive, the pomegranate, the almond, and the melon still grow in rich abundance, wherever they are planted and cared for, and the grape flourishes better than in almost any other climate. In our day, apples may be had from orchards near Gaza, and every vegetable common in England is as common in Palestine. Indeed, one kind of onion—the shallot, or eschalot—is named from Ascalon, the Ascalonia of the Crusaders, of which our word shallot is a corruption. The oranges of Joppa are well known, and this fruit and the citron were equally famous over the lowlands in the days of Christ, both having been brought from the East after the Jews returned from Babylon. In many spots on the plains the country is beautiful in spring with the blossom of orchards and the tender green of rising crops, but it must have been much more so nineteen hundred years ago, when there were no such long gaps of waste land as there are now, and the landscape showed, in varied charms, the labours of the fruit-grower, the gardener, and the husbandman.

The mountains swelling up from the foot hills can only be entered by a few passes, through which paths,

or rather wild tracks, climb, often no better than the rough bottom of a quarry, so thickly covered are they with stones and rocks of all sizes. The mountains themselves are nearly everywhere mere slopes and humps of stone, sometimes hidden by dwarf trees and bushes, sometimes varied by lines of loose stone walls which form narrow terraces for this crop or that, but for the most part naked and forbidding, though grass and plants sufficient to pasture flocks of goats, spring up in their seams and chinks. Thistles and thorns of all kinds abound everywhere. The region into which the mountain passes lead was, as I have said, the home of the Jewish people, who were kept shut up in them by the populations of the rich lowlands near the sea, till very late in their history, though they had villages on some of the low heights overlooking them.

This region, in which our Lord lived, and beyond which he rarely wandered, is in every part high over the level of the coast, its round hills rising from two thousand five hundred to over three thousand feet above the sea. Once forming a tableland it has only been worn into hills and valleys by the rains and weather through many ages. The rock of which they consist is soft grey limestone, abounding in larger and smaller caves, and in the south of the country, which used to be called Judea, is now very often bare and desolate. In the days of Christ, however, these landscapes were not so forbidding, for not only were there spots like the neighbourhood of Bethlehem, which still looks green and pleasant; the sides of the hills, now so grey and stony, were largely made into the terraces of which I have already spoken, one above the other, each forming a bank of soil for the growth of vines, fruit trees, or grain. Judea must always, however, have been a very barren country, for even its valleys have far more stones than soil. But things are far worse since the terraces were neglected. The hot summer sun, swelling the moisture distilled on the hills by the sea-wind each night, continually splits off the surface, and this skin of loose stones is washed

down into the valleys by the wild rains of winter, so that the rocks are left quite bare of soil.

As you go north, this gaunt barrenness slowly passes into increasing green. The middle part of the country, once known as Samaria, which in Christ's day was under the same ruler as Judea, is made up of rounded hills and pleasant valleys, far richer than those in the



NAZARETH.

south, but still not at all so rich as the hills and valleys of England. Olives, figs, almonds, and pomegranates grow freely on the hillsides, and patches of barley or wheat brighten most of the hollows. There are also more springs, which means greater plenty of all kinds of growth. Samaria extended quite across the hill country to the south side of the Carmel hills, which run for many miles north-west, to the coast, on the south side of the Bay of Acre. Carmel means a garden, orchard, or park,

and speaks of the ancient wooded beauty of these heights. They are not high, and have no sharp peaks, but stretch along, like all the hills of Palestine, in wave after wave of long rounded tops. Samaria was at first the country of the great tribe of Ephraim, but the only part of the land that kept the name of a Jewish tribe after the armies of Nineveh and Babylon had carried away the nation, was Judea, which means the "Jew's country;" the race taking the name of Jews from "Judah."

On the north side of the hills of Carmel lies the greatest tract of level ground in the Holy Land: about twenty miles from end to end, and fourteen across, at its widest part. It runs nearly north and south, and is enclosed in low hills, so that whichever way you look, the view is shut in by heights. Coming from the south you enter this great plain, once called that of Jezreel, near its south end, and see the "mountains of Gilboa," where Saul and Jonathan were slain, facing you, and narrowing the plain very much. Straight north, shining in pleasant whiteness from the side of a hill, three miles back from the plain, the houses of Nazareth look towards you from a distance of about twenty miles, though they seem far nearer, through the clear air. There are no villages on the road except Jezreel, which is only a few wretched mud hovels, with one or two of stone, and an old watchtower, looking down on them from the low swell on which they and it stand. The whole plain was dotted with villages in Christ's day, towns rose on the slopes of the hills on both sides, and the landscape, far and near, was a succession of fields, orchards, and gardens. At present you ride over a wide expanse of the richest soil, left to thistles and weeds, with only here and there a patch of grain, while the villages are high up on the hills, to be out of danger from the wild Arabs who overrun the district whenever they can, and not only rob and steal, but are ready to kill.

CHAPTER II

MARY AND ELIZABETH

To get to Nazareth you have to climb the face of a hill by a rude track, which has been the only road to the town for many ages. Your horse clammers as only the horses of the country can, sometimes up places so steep that you are glad to catch hold of its mane, to keep your seat. Huge masses of rock not seldom appear to bar further progress, but you find there is room between them for your beast to pass, though hardly more than is needed. Sheets of bare rock have to be crossed, at times made still more dangerous by their slanting this way or that, with no foothold for the creature under you. Some hundreds of feet have to be thus ascended, to find that for nearly three miles, the track though no longer a hard climb, is as wild, bare, and rocky as can be fancied. Only after a very wearisome hour do you reach Nazareth, which rises on the side of a hill, house over house, with a sweet little valley below, shut in by rounded grey hills perfectly bare.

In this little hill-town of Nazareth there lived, nineteen hundred years ago, a carpenter named Joseph, a widower, with sons and daughters—poor, of course, with such a calling, in so simple a village, but a man of high worth, fearing God and respected by his neighbours. He was now engaged, or betrothed,¹ to a maiden named Mary; but it was the custom for those who had thus been promised in marriage to each other, to wait often for a year before the wedding finally took place. During this time the maiden stayed at home with her parents or friends, and was never seen by her intended bride-

¹ Betroth means to promise "by one's truth."

groom. Indeed, in the East, women in all ages have been far more private in their life than with us. They do not appear at merry-makings, nor do they ever speak to men. In fact, they are not seen even if you visit a house, but keep in their own part of it. Hence, when Christ spoke with the woman at the well of Samaria, the disciples, though they said nothing, wondered that he did so. A Jewish husband in Christ's day saw his wife's face for the first time after he was married, and from the hour she was his she saw no other man, except as she passed to or from the well, or on some errand, or to the synagogue—that is, to the Jewish church—and there she sat, with the rest of her sex, in a part shut off by a close lattice or a curtain, as in the synagogues of the present day.

But a strange thing was to happen to Mary. One day, after she had been engaged to Joseph, she was in her house, when suddenly a man appeared in her chamber, where she was all alone, though no man was allowed to enter the room of a woman. She must, therefore, have been greatly alarmed; but the words of the stranger, and no doubt his appearance and voice, presently calmed her mind. Nor did he let her long wonder at his visit, for he forthwith saluted her with the words, "Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee." But still she was greatly troubled till she learned that the visitor was no other than the angel Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was told by him that there was no need for fear; she had found favour with God, and had been chosen by Him to be the mother of a Son, who would be great, and would be called holy, and the Son of the Most High, and bear the name of JESUS. Having spoken thus, Mary was forthwith once more alone, the angel returning unseen to heaven.

Six months before this wonderful vision appeared to Mary, something equally wonderful had happened, far away from Nazareth, at a village called Juttah, in the hill country of the hot and dry south, not far from Hebron. A priest called Zacharias lived there, with his wife

Elizabeth, who, like himself, was of the blood of Aaron, the brother of Moses, so that both were of the purest Jewish birth, and, indeed, members of the most famous branch of Jewish nobility. They were both, moreover, persons of a pure and beautiful life, and were not only "righteous before God," but also so strictly obedient to the Jewish Church that they kept all its commandments and ordinances blamelessly, though these were very numerous, and required much labour and care to observe them. Zacharias had to do duty at the Temple only twice a year, for a week each time, so that he lived mostly at Juttah, where he would have a good deal to do as a priest, in the private calls of his neighbours for various services. His home lay, as I have said, high up in the hill country south of Hebron, but that part was not so desolate and barren as it is now; the ruins of towns and villages telling of busy life then filling the whole landscape. It is famous for the vine, and the olive and fig grow in the hollows and on the slopes, while the hills far and near have always supported large numbers of sheep and goats, though not so fitted for cattle. It must not be supposed, however, that the pasture was like that of England, for it is quite wonderful to see the bareness of the valleys or rocks from which both sheep and goats, in Palestine, manage to get their food. But what with his share of the priest's glebe in Juttah, and the fees and offerings he would from time to time get, Zacharias and his wife, we may believe, were very well-to-do in a humble way, and had great reason, as they sat peacefully under their own vine and fig-tree—the vine interlacing through the fig, to make a shelter from the hot sun—to thank God that their lot was so fortunate.

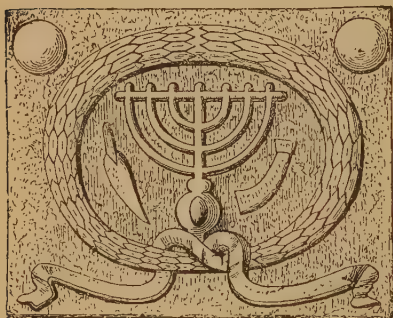
But the worthy couple had a private sorrow which they felt keenly. No wish is so strong in the Jew as to have a son, that his name may not be blotted out from among his people; and this feeling is as deep with Jewish wives. It was fancied, of old, to be a sign of the anger of God if a woman were childless, and was such a reproach among men that wives were often sent away

by their husbands, when this was the case, and some one else taken in their place. Not only so, but a woman had the right, if her husband died before she had a child, to demand that his brother should marry her, as you will remember is shown in the question put to our Lord by the Sadducees, about a wife who married seven brothers, one after the other, as they one by one died, leaving her childless. Worst of all, both Zacharias and Elizabeth were old, and old people have not young children. But they were soon to see that there is nothing impossible with God.

The time had again come for Zacharias to serve for his week in the Temple at Jerusalem, and he had gone thither, living in one of the chambers set apart for priests on duty, at the sides of the Temple grounds. These were very large, forming a great open space of about thirty-five acres, which you will better understand when I say that the wall enclosing it made altogether about a mile along the four sides. It was very much the shape of an ordinary book, and had been formed, by wonderful labour, on the rough top of Mount Moriah, the steep slopes having been brought up to a level by great walls, and by arches, which were then covered with earth, while the places that had been too high had been cut away, except the very summit of the hill, which was left in its natural roughness, and still may be seen inside the Dome of the Rock, formerly known as the Mosque of Omar, above the level of the grounds outside. The Temple itself was small, for it had only two chambers, though there was a high porch in front of it, and rooms for various uses were built behind this, at the sides of the sacred building. In front of the porch, probably on the rough summit of the hill, stood the great brazen altar, built of large unhewn stones, originally covered with open copper-work, to keep them together, but in Christ's day hidden by coats of white cement. Standing fourteen or fifteen feet high, with a slope leading up to it, and forming a great square of between forty and fifty feet on each side, it could be seen from all parts of the

Temple grounds. With the sanctuary itself, it occupied the highest ground, the space around it being the Court of the Priests, outside which were other courts—one for Jewish men, a second for Jewish women, and a third for worshippers of foreign birth; each lower than the other, and all three lower than the space left for the priests, the great altar, and the Temple building, so that these, seen from the Temple grounds, stood clear above all.

One of the most solemn acts of daily worship was the incense offering,



THE GOLDEN CANDLESICK.

(From a relief in Tiberias.)

morning and evening, just before the morning and the evening sacrifice. The priest who officiated entered the Holy Place, in which stood the table of shewbread, set out with twelve loaves, laid as it were before God, and renewed each Sabbath; the seven-branched golden candlestick; and a golden altar, known as the altar of incense. Before he approached, other priests had trimmed the candlestick, removed the dead coals from the altar, and put on it glowing charcoal, taken from the great altar outside, and had retired with their faces to the Holy of Holies, bowing to it lowly, and repeating set prayers as they withdrew. Lots were drawn each day to decide who should have so great an honour as to offer the incense—which was believed to bring a blessing with it, and was allowed to no one more than once in his life.

It happened that, on one of the days of his week's

duty, this special dignity fell to Zacharias, who, we may be sure, was deeply pleased with his good fortune. Wearing a white linen turban on his head, a loose-sleeved tunic of the same material, reaching from his neck to a little below his knees, over short white linen drawers; a white linen girdle binding it round his waist, and his legs and feet, as well as part of his arms, bare—the full priestly dress—he received the censer from the proper official, and with lowly reverence, opening the massive door and drawing aside the curtain, passed into the awful silence of the Holy Place. The signal of his having laid the incense on the altar was given outside, and was followed, on the part of the congregation, by their throwing themselves prostrate, in silent prayer, in the courts below the Temple, and in the wide space beyond. Having sprinkled the incense on the glowing charcoal, it was the appointed course for the priest to bow to the Holy of Holies, and retire slowly backwards, that the crowds outside might know of the offering having been accepted, and not be alarmed lest God from any cause had struck down the priest. But Zacharias was not able to give them this satisfaction, for to his terror, as he stood at the altar, he saw an angel of the Lord on the right side of it—that is, on the side which boded something good. Indeed, the place itself was enough to affect the mind; so near the Holy of Holies, where God had His peculiar seat; so still; so strange, with no light but the feeble glow of the wood embers on the altar. Yet there was no cause for fear. It was Gabriel, sent by God to tell the worthy Zacharias that his wife would bear a son, whose name should be called John—that is the son “whom God has graciously given.” This child, moreover, it was announced, was to drink no wine or strong drink, but to be great in the sight of the Lord, and to be filled with the Holy Ghost from his very birth.

Scarcely able to think such a wonderful blessing possible, but calmed by the tones and look of the angel, Zacharias ventured to ask how he might know that what he had been told would happen. He must have been

too confused to think clearly what he said, else he never would have spoken thus, in such a place and at such a time. Dumbness, sent on him at the moment, was the deserved sign that the promise would be kept; and this, moreover, was to last till after the child was born. Meanwhile, the people outside were alarmed at his delay in reappearing, to give them his priestly benediction and dismiss them. But when at last he showed himself, it was clear why he had detained them, for by signs he made it understood, though he could not speak, that he had seen a vision.

Six or seven months after this, Mary, who had also been recently honoured, as we have seen, by vision, and had learned from the angel that Elizabeth, her kinswoman, though so old, was to have a son; determined to go to her, that the two might talk of the wonderful things that had happened to each. It was a long journey for Mary, Juttah being at least a hundred miles, by the nearest roads, from Nazareth; but she could easily join some small company travelling south, and could doubtless ride, as all the people do still in Palestine, on an ass.

The meeting would be a touching one to both, and has left us, as its result on the spirit of Mary, the grandest hymn of the New Testament, called from its first word in the Latin Bible, the Magnificat. She must have known the Old Testament wonderfully well to utter words so filled with its purest spirit, and her mind must have been as gifted as her religious feeling was lofty, to fit them together into such a psalm of praise and triumph. Listen to it, and think of it as the song of a young Hebrew girl of humble station, in a poor hill village in Galilee.

My soul doth magnify the Lord,
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour,
For He hath looked upon the low estate of His handmaiden.
For, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.
For He that is mighty hath done to me great things ;
And holy is His name.

And His mercy is unto generations and generations,
On them that fear Him.
He hath showed strength with His arm ;
He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their heart.
He hath put down princes from their thrones,
And hath exalted them of low degree.
The hungry He hath filled with good things ;
And the rich He hath sent empty away.
He hath holpen Israel His servant,
That He might remember mercy
(As He spake unto our fathers)
Towards Abraham and his seed for ever.

Mary stayed about three months with Zacharias and Elizabeth, apparently till the birth of John the Baptist, Elizabeth's child ; and then, having seen the promise of the angel fulfilled in this case, and knowing it would be so in her own, she turned her face to the north, and made her way once more to Nazareth.

CHAPTER III

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST AT BETHLEHEM

IN the time of Christ the Holy Land was part of the great Roman Empire, at the head of which stood the monarch known best by his title, Augustus—"the sacred exalted one"—his name being Octavius Cæsar. But just as native kings reign now in India, under the Empress of India, our Queen, so, in the Roman Empire, many countries were left in the hands of their own rulers, though under Augustus. The name of the king in Palestine, at the birth of Christ, was Herod, a very clever but a bad man. To make his throne, as he thought, safe, he had murdered his best-loved wife and her two sons, her father, her mother, and her brothers; their crime being that they were members of the old royal family of the Jews, while he was not a Jew at all, but an Edomite—that is, one of a race which every Jew hated beyond measure. The bitterness between the two nations had grown steadily greater, indeed, for many hundred years, till at last they had come to feel such an abhorrence of each other that a Jewish writer about Christ's time says of Edom—that is, of the people descended from Esau—"When I can change the skin and the bristles of a swine to wool, and when horns grow out of its head like the horns of a sheep, then will I have brotherly love to thee. And when wolves make peace with lambs, then shall I be at peace with thee in my heart; and when the lion is the friend of the ox, and goes in the yoke and ploughs with him, then I will make peace with thee; and when the raven grows white, then shall I love thee and keep peace with thee."

That a person of a race thus loathed should sit on the throne of David was a terrible thing in the opinion of

every Jew; and hence all the reign of Herod was disturbed by revolts against him, though they only led to misery and slaughter among those who joined in them.

About four years before the time from which we date the birth of Christ, Augustus had sent a command to Herod to cause all his subjects to go to the towns or villages from which their families had at first come, or where they held property, that their names, and the value they owned in land or otherwise, might be registered—for the two ends, of knowing how many soldiers could be raised from among them, and what taxes could be laid upon them. We call such an inquiry a census, and have it taken every ten years, though no one is required to move from where he may be at the time.

Herod having published this command of his master, the whole country was astir. Away in Nazareth Joseph had taken Mary as his wife, an angel



GOLD DARIIC OF AUGUSTUS.

having appeared to him in a dream, and directed him to do so, telling him that she would ere long have a son, whom God Himself had given her, and that the child's name was to be JESUS—that is, “help,” “deliverance,” or “salvation”—because he would save his people from their sins. But the command of Herod broke in on their quiet just after this, and it was necessary that they should both go to Bethlehem, a hill-town a few miles south of Jerusalem, between eighty and ninety miles from Nazareth; both of them being descended from David, the great King of Israel, and Bethlehem being the place where he and his father had lived.

Any one who has been in the Holy Land can picture to himself how they travelled. Even now the ass is used almost exclusively, and it was still more common two

thousand years ago ; indeed, it is mentioned over forty times in the Bible from the days of Abraham onwards, and was ridden by all classes, till Solomon brought horses from Egypt. One meets it on every road in Palestine, but horses are rare. The peasant rides home from his toil in the field on a bare-backed ass, his light plough across its shoulders, before him. If you come on a string of camels taking wheat, or wool, or oil to some port, they generally follow a turbaned figure who leads the way on a small ass. Nothing is more common than to see a husband walking alongside an ass, on which his wife sits with a child in her arms ; and thus, I have no doubt, it would be with Joseph. Nobody is too poor to own an ass, for it can graze without cost on the open hillside, and it needs no stable, but lies down at night in the little yard at the side of the house, or even comes into the dwelling, and makes itself at home in the back part of the one chamber ; with some goats, perhaps, or a few thin sheep, lying down beside it, and cocks and hens roosting on a spar overhead. The floor of a poor man's house is of hard mud, a little higher near the door than at the back : the higher part for the family ; while the live stock, whether feathered or four-footed, have the lower to themselves. In a very poor house the one room is used both by day and night, but in better dwellings, a rude outside stair from the yard leads to sleeping places—for I can hardly call them rooms—which are built very often over only half of the roof, the other half being left open to the sky, though there is a low wall round, to prevent any one falling over. On this open space there is generally a mud dovecot rising like a clumsy sugar-loaf ; pigeons flying in and out as they choose. Downstairs there is frequently no furniture at all ; a mud bench raised along the wall, and covered with whatever the house can afford, supplying the want of a sofa or chairs by day, and of bedsteads by night. Nor is the want of what we think necessary much felt, for people in the East seem to like best to sit on a mat of rushes or palm leaves on the floor, and often sleep there,

on these thin beds. The want of dishes cannot be great where all eat out of one huge bowl, dipping their hands into it for what they wish, nor is a table of any height required where people sit cross-legged on the floor.

It would be a great mistake, however, to think that because the houses are so poor and so empty, the people are rough or coarse. The song of Mary shows what high thoughts, what a pure mind, and what a perfect character might be found in some of them in Christ's day; and, though the humble classes of Palestine have not, in our time, the grandeur of soul she displays, they are mild, courteous, and wonderfully dignified in their bearing. Among us a poor man is apt to cringe before those richer than himself, but there is nothing of this in the East. The poorest villager has a quiet self-respect that is never put about even before the highest dignitary. He feels that he is a man, and bears himself like one, though with no rudeness or disrespect to others. I have seen a humble beggar and the governor of the district speaking together with as perfect ease and good breeding on both sides as if they were equals.

Mary and Joseph would start for Bethlehem with at least one ass, for Mary to ride; himself walking at its side. They would go down the steep bluff above the plain of Jezreel; then across the broad plain to the rough pass near Engannim, leading to the uplands of Samaria. Then on the second day would come Samaria, where Joseph would be troubled to find shelter, for fear of defiling himself, as a strict Jew, by anything Samaritan. Next day they would rest at Nablûs, the ancient Shechem; the day after near Gibeah; and on the fifth day they would be at Jerusalem, from which a short journey of five or six miles would bring them to Bethlehem.

That famous place lies 2550 feet above the sea, the ridge of the hill on which it stands being thus a hundred feet higher than Jerusalem. Yet it hardly seems the mountain town it is, for the whole country consists of hills, only reached by a long and weary climb from

the coast plains. The road by which Mary and Joseph entered Bethlehem looks down, on the left, into a wide green valley, sprinkled with olive groves and patches of grain, or ploughed land. The little town bends along the ridge of the hill, which is fretted below by the great stone walls of terraces, green with fruit trees and vines. The rounded hills across the valley are bare and grey to the east; and the long upward slopes of a new hill, a little way off, said to be that over which the angels sang, closing the valley on that side. Then the landscape sinks, in great steps, towards the Dead Sea, which is about thirteen miles off, but lies nearly four thousand feet lower than Bethlehem. Beyond its deep-blue waters rise the Moabite hills, flat-topped, and yellowish pink in colour—a beautiful sight to see.

There is one long street of flat-roofed—mostly separate—houses, in the town, with offshoots from it to another shorter street behind; and this must always have been so, from the narrowness of the hill-ridge. All the houses are built of the yellowish-white limestone of the town-hill, and are, at most, of two storeys, many of them, on the right hand, as you enter the town from the north, running into the hill at the back; the rock having been cut away to receive them, as I have seen in some cases in the Isle of Wight. Not a few thus built include a natural or artificial cave as a part of the dwelling; all the hills of Palestine being full of hollow spaces, to have one of which behind is an advantage to a house, as it forms a ready-made storehouse or stable, where the lumber of the family may be put away, and the ass, or goats, or fowls, can have shelter.

When Mary and Joseph reached the City of David, it was so full of strangers coming, like themselves, to be registered, that no house had room to receive them. There are no “inns” like ours in the East, but no native finds difficulty, in ordinary times, in obtaining shelter, since all the accommodation sought is to be allowed to lie down for the night on a mat or on the floor, in the clothes one wears by day. Every one, moreover, brings



BETHLEHEM—THE TERRACED HILL

his own food, and some barley or short broken straw for his ass, so that it costs nothing to take strangers under one's roof. We may be sure, therefore, that had there been room in any house in the town, Mary and Joseph would have been free to make use of it. The only accommodation they could have, however, was in the place where the household ass and other creatures had their nightly quarters; and there, in so lowly a shelter, Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, and the Son of God, was born, very soon after Mary reached Bethlehem.

A cave under the high altar of the Church of the Nativity, at the end of the little town, is shown as the spot thus greatly honoured. Thirteen steps lead down to it, but it looks very little like a cave when you reach it, for it is paved and lined round with marble, and lighted by thirty-two lamps, as of course it has no light from the sun. The roof is covered with faded cloth of gold, and three huge candlesticks, with candles rising above one's head, stand at the back, while a very dark picture of the Nativity rests opposite these, on a ledge called an altar, supported at the sides by some small marble pillars. Below this, a half-circle, about four feet high and a yard deep, scooped out like a shell, is lighted by fifteen silver lamps, which burn night and day for ever, round the coloured marbles of the little recess. But the chief interest centres on a silver star in the half-circle underneath this illumination, for it is believed to mark the spot over which the Star of the East once rested, and therefore the very place where our Lord was born. Along the front you read also the touching words in Latin: "Here Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin." Pilgrims from all lands bow with lowly reverence, and kiss the marble hallowed by such thoughts; and when I was there, I kneeled down and did so with the rest, for it seems very probable that this was really the scene of Christ's birth. So long ago as about thirty or forty years after the death of St. John, the last survivor of the apostles, it was revered as being so, and there could hardly be stronger proof that it deserves the honour.

Indeed, from that early time till now it has been held sacred. St. Jerome made his home in a poor cave close to it, and lived there for thirty years, that he might be near the birthplace of his Lord,¹ and every century since has seen countless pilgrimages to it.

That a cave should be regarded as the birthplace of the Redeemer may seem strange in other countries, but it is not at all strange in the Holy Land. I have said that all the hills in Palestine are full of holes and caverns of all sizes. Nothing is more common than to put up sheep, goats, asses, or even cattle, in such places, even when they are, as it were, part of a dwelling. The little ewe lamb of the poor man "grew up together with him and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drink of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter,"² coming to him, no doubt, as he sat or slept on the floor of his humble mud house of one room, from its own place at the back, where the floor was lower, and where its mother had lain before it, and there the ass had its crib and the fowls their roost.

¹ St. Jerome lived A.D. 331-420.

² 2 Sam. xii. 3.

CHAPTER IV

THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE

THE birth of an earthly prince is announced to all lands; but the Son of God came into the world unnoticed even by the villagers of Bethlehem, while Jerusalem, a few miles off, learned of his birth only when a star was guiding wise men from the East to his cradle. But if it were unnoticed on earth, it was a great event in heaven; so great that a choir of angels descended to earth to show their interest in the great event, and appeared to a band of shepherds then lying out through the night with their flocks, on a hill near Bethlehem; perhaps like those you may still see there, with sheepskin coats over their long blue shirts, turbans made by an old kerchief bound round a felt or cotton skull-cap, and their legs and arms left uncovered. Simple as children, they have no learning of any kind, and live away from men, with no companions but the sheep. They were not so degraded, however, in ancient times, for David was a shepherd, and so was Amos the prophet; and we know that, in Christ's day, every Jewish child was carefully taught in the Old Testament, which itself must have quickened their minds and raised their whole nature. That the shepherds to whom the angels appeared were in the field by night—even if Christmas be the exact time of our Saviour's birth—is nothing strange in such a climate, for the weather is sometimes pleasant even then. It seems most probable that Christ was born between December and February, but the day is not surely known.

The story of the appearance of the heavenly host is very simply told in the Gospel by St. Luke. As the shepherds lay, amidst their sheep and goats, "an angel

of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Be not afraid; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord." A sign by which to know him was then given. "Ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes,¹ and lying in a manger." "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest (heavens), and on earth peace, good will toward men." Having sung this carol, the shining choir went up again to heaven; the shepherds wondering what such a vision could mean. Leaving some of their number, therefore, to guard their flocks, they hastened down the hill, over the little valley, and up the steep slope to Bethlehem, and found Mary and Joseph and the babe. No wonder we are told that they "returned to their flocks glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen."

It was a custom that every Jewish boy should be circumcised on the eighth day after his birth, and this was duly carried out in the case of the child Jesus. The name also was given then, so that the rite, in that respect, was very like our baptism. Mary, however, could not by Jewish law go out of the house where her infant was born, for forty days—that is, you may say, for six weeks—but, after that, it was required of her to go to the Temple, being so near it, that the rite of "purification," which was just like our "churching," should be duly observed. Her journey would not be on foot, for it was needful to guard against her touching anything which was thought "unclean"; and, indeed, it is quite probable that, like most Jewish women in such cases in those days, she rode to Jerusalem on a cow or an ox,

¹ Babies, in Palestine, are still wrapped in strips of cotton cloth about six inches broad and three yards long.



A SHEPHERD WITH HIS FLOCK, NEAR JERICHO

that the great body of the creature might prevent her coming near such a thing as a grave or a dead body, or whatever else might "defile" her. She would go in the early morning, for coolness, and after riding past the tomb of Rachel, which still rises at the side of the road not far from Bethlehem, would pass slowly on till she came to Jerusalem, and would then make her way through the rough sloping lanes of the city, to the entrance of the Women's Court on the east side of the Temple.

Ascending to it through the "Beautiful Gate," so called from its being covered with plates of shining Corinthian brass, more costly than gold, she and the other women who had come for the same purpose as herself, would wait till the priest came and received their offerings. The richer women gave a male lamb of a year old, which was presently killed; the fat, and the great broad tail, which in Syrian sheep weighs several pounds, being then burnt on the altar; while the rest was shared between the priest and the offerer, and used as food by both. Besides this, the well-to-do mothers would have a young pigeon or a turtle dove, for a sin offering. Lambs cost more than poor people could afford, but a pair of young pigeons or two turtle doves, which the humblest could buy, might be offered instead. Pigeons abound in the Holy Land, and turtle doves come by thousands in spring, and nestle in the fig and olive trees near every village. Joseph and Mary could only present the modest sacrifice of doves, just as a poor person might offer the smallest silver coin to the poor's box, at her churching.

The priest now proclaimed her "purified," and free to go forth into common life again. Descending the fifteen broad steps, under a great glittering golden vine which Herod had put up over the gate, she had to pass through the Court of the Men to reach that of her own sex. Worshipers had already assembled for the morning sacrifice, and, among others, one Simeon, an old man, known by his neighbours as righteous and devout, and one of the few who wearily looked for the consolation

of Israel under all its troubles, by the coming of the Messiah. It had been made known to him by the Holy Spirit that he should see "the Lord's Christ," or Anointed One, before he died; and now, when Mary brought the child Jesus past him, he somehow felt that the promise had been fulfilled, and taking the babe in his arms, blessed God for having seen that hour:—"Now," said he aloud, "lettest Thou Thy servant depart, O Lord, according to Thy word, in peace: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples; a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel." Then turning to Joseph and Mary, he blessed them, and told Mary that this child would be a sorrow to some and a blessing to others in Israel, and that many would speak evil of him. A sword, moreover, would pierce through her own soul. Could he have lived long enough, he would have seen how true his words were; for his nation, by refusing to accept Christ, brought on themselves sorrow, while many, by becoming his disciples, were saved here and hereafter. How keenly, moreover, did the sword pierce Mary's heart when her Son was at last crucified on Calvary!

Besides Simeon, there was another whose joy at the appearing of Christ is told us: a very old woman, Anna, a prophetess, of the northern tribe of Asher, who had been a widow for eighty-four years, after having been married for seven years. Having no worldly cares in her humble old age, this saint almost lived in the Temple, frequenting it at all hours when it was open. She too, being present when Jesus was brought by his mother, gave thanks to God on seeing him; the joy so filling her heart that, feeble as she must have been, she spread the news among all who were looking for redemption in Jerusalem.

CHAPTER V

THE VISIT OF THE MAGI

AT the time of Christ's birth, and for about four years afterwards, the Holy Land was under the rule of Herod the Great. The son of an Edomite,¹ as I have already said, he had induced Rome to make him king over all Palestine, from the desert, on the south, to Lebanon on the north, and also over the country east of the Jordan. Cæsarea, on the coast, had been built by him, and he had beautified many towns of his dominions; but he failed to gain the affection of his people, for he everywhere introduced Roman customs, and showed favour to heathenism, building theatres and circuses, and temples for the gods, in different places. To defile the land of Israel thus was, in the opinion of the Jews, to insult Jehovah, to whom, they held, it belonged. No king in Palestine, they fancied, could reign lawfully, unless appointed by God, and even then he could only act as the representative, or, as it were, commissioner of Jehovah, whose will alone, not his own, he was bound in all things to follow; that will being made known in sacred writings, as explained by the religious leaders of the people. But Herod never dreamed of taking such a humble position, and reigned exactly like a heathen prince, except where fear of the people made him cautious. No one, meanwhile, knew better than he that the Jews loathed him, as, indeed, they well might, for if he had fed them at great cost during a year of famine, he had also murdered all the members of their native royal family, whom they passionately loved. And if he had built them a magnifi-

¹ The Edomites were descendants of Esau, and lived in Idumea, a mountainous region south-east of Palestine, their capital being latterly known as Petra.

cent temple at Jerusalem, he had also built temples to the Emperor Augustus, and had even opened a heathen theatre and circus in the Holy City itself!

Another cause of uneasiness to the king rose from the fact that he reigned only by permission of Rome, which he had to please, as the over-lord of the country. His title came from the emperor; he could do nothing of importance without imperial permission, and, worst of all, he had to raise and send to him a large amount each year, as taxes. To the Jew the idea of paying tribute to Cæsar was almost beyond endurance, for it seemed treason to God, the rightful sovereign: just as we should dislike to pay taxes to a power that had conquered us, after our own Queen had been dethroned. It was, hence, the deep absorbing idea with every Jew, that heathen Rome should be driven from the land, and the Law of Moses made the statute book of Jewish rulers. This feeling was kindled and sustained by the inspired words of their ancient prophets, who painted a golden age for Israel, when the heathen should have no more power in the land, and all tribes and peoples should flock to Jerusalem as the glory of the world. This grand triumph of the Jewish race over all other nations was to be brought about, they thought, by the appearance of a mighty Leader sent from God—the Messiah or Anointed One, who should rouse the land against its oppressors, and, having swept them from it, would reign, without seeing death, over all the earth, with his throne in Jerusalem. In the words of one of the Psalms, “All kings would fall down before him; all nations would serve him.” The Jew was, in fact, to become the lord of the world, under this heavenly Deliverer; and the sufferings of their race in the past, would be avenged by trampling the heathen under their feet, and ruling them with a rod of iron.

With such strange and mad pride filling every heart, it was impossible for Herod or any other friend of Rome to have an easy reign. Every Jew was his enemy, and the more devoted any one was to the Law, so much the more dangerous was he as a subject. The whole race

were eagerly expecting the appearance of the Messiah, to lead them in the struggle against their foe, and erect his glorious kingdom. Even before Christ was born, plots had been rife to set up such pretenders. Nor was it of any use to crush them, for others speedily took their place.

It so happened that just about the time of Christ's birth, an attempt had been made in his own palace to overthrow Herod, by setting up such a false Messiah. But he had found out the plot before it was ripe, and stifled it in blood. It could not, however, fail to make him anxious, for it was a grave matter that, after all the murders he had committed to secure his throne, he should find fresh enemies rising in his own household.

Some time after the birth of Our Lord, the arrival of some strangers in Jerusalem from the East—perhaps from Persia or the countries near it—once more roused Herod's suspicions and fears respecting his throne. After the Captivity in Babylon, by far the larger part of the Jews remained in those regions, declining to return to the Holy Land, when permitted to do so by Cyrus. As time passed, these Eastern Jews had in many cases become prosperous, and had so increased in number that, as the Book of Esther tells us, they were to be found everywhere throughout the vast Persian Empire. That they should spread their religious opinions was a matter of course, and hence the hope of a Messiah was very widely known. Moreover, the religion of Persia, which was known as that of the Magi—a name meaning "The great," or "powerful,"—was, in many respects, very like that of the people of Israel. They believed in angels, in heaven and hell, in a future judgment, and in one God. The Magi, who were the priests of their faith, believed themselves descended, as a class, from Balaam, who had been summoned by the King of Moab from his home at Pether, on the river Euphrates, to curse Israel, when it was about to cross over the Jordan into Palestine. He had gone to Moab on this invitation, but instead of cursing the tribes, he had given them his blessing, and

had foretold that a Star would come forth out of Jacob, and a sceptre rise out of Israel, and that one out of Jacob should have dominion.¹ This had long been held by the Jews to refer to the Messiah whom they expected; and as it was a common belief that stars appeared at the birth of great personages, there was a general confidence that some new star or new wonder in the heavens would herald the birth of this mighty prince. Such a star, men declared, had shown itself at the birth of Moses: how much more would a like "sign" appear, when God had visited His people by sending them the Messiah?

And such a sign did really show itself. What it was, we cannot now tell; but there was noticed in the skies about the time when Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem some appearance which was new or striking, and this was at once thought by those who saw it, and were expecting the Messiah, to be his herald. The Magi had from the earliest times been devoted to the study of the heavens, and watched the motions of the planets with the most patient care, believing, as indeed every one did then, and till not very long ago, that the sun, moon, and planets, had wonderful power over all that happened in this world. Coming wars, plagues, famines, earthquakes, droughts, floods, the birth or death of kings, and whatever else makes the welfare or sorrow of mankind were supposed to be revealed to these "Wise Men" by the heavenly bodies. It was natural, then, that some of the Magi, impressed by the expectation among the Jews, of the birth of a great Prince of their race, destined to rule over all the world, should have been very much moved by the strange sight that now glittered overhead. What it was, as I have said, is not known. It may have been some uncommon nearness of two or more planets to each other, or it may have been the sudden blazing out of some star not hitherto noticed, for there have been several cases of such a wonderful shining for a time of a new star which afterwards disappeared.

¹ Num. xxiv. 17, 19.

But, whatever it was, some of the Magi saw in it the signal of the great Jewish Leader's birth, and set out to the Holy Land, to pay him reverence. They had a long way to travel, and could only advance at a very slow rate, for they, no doubt, came on camels, which walk even more slowly than the ass, so that they must have been on their way long before Christ's birth, to reach Bethlehem at the time they did.

The arrival of these strangers in their foreign dress, with their camels and turbaned attendants, must have made a stir in Jerusalem in any case. But it would do so still more, when they told what had brought them—a new star, proclaiming the birth of “The King of the Jews,” so long expected by the nation, and so much feared by its ruler. The whole world, indeed, was troubled by the expectation that a great king was about to rise in Judea, who would overthrow all existing powers, and bring the whole of mankind to his feet. When, therefore, the news reached the king, of the arrival of the Magi, inquiring for the New King, and saying that they had been guided to Jerusalem by a star in their search for him, he was seriously alarmed, and sent for the strangers, to find out all he could from them, under the pretence that he, like them, wished to pay the young prince homage, but really, that he might put him to death. The Magi, however, could only say that the star had shone over them, and that they were sure it was intended to lead them to the birth-place of the expected Messiah. Herod needed, therefore, to summon the Jewish Rabbis, or teachers of the Law, before him, and discover from them where this wonderful being was to appear: a question easy for them to answer, for they agreed that it was told in the words of Micah, one of their ancient prophets:—“And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art in no wise least among the princes of Judah: for out of thee shall come forth a Governor, who shall be shepherd of my people Israel.”¹ Having learned this, Herod once more called

¹ Matt. ii. 6, R.V. See also Micah v. 2.

the Magi before him secretly, and told them to find out exactly all about the young child, and bring him word, that he might go to him and worship him. But God did not allow his crafty scheme to succeed.

Having found that Bethlehem was the place to which they were next to turn, the Wise Men left Jerusalem, and set out for that village. It lies about five miles south of the Holy City, and was reached in those days by a well-made, though narrow, Roman causeway, of which there are now few traces. They might wonder, as their camels strode on between the bare grey hills on each side, that a country so barren should be destined to rule the world, but, if they did so, the sight of the star shining above them silenced all questionings and filled them with joy, especially when, on their arrival at Bethlehem, it seemed to stand over the little mountain town. Whether they found the Holy Child easily, or, as Herod had supposed, needed to "search out carefully" for him before they did so, is not told; but the fact of the king having expected that they would have trouble in discovering him, shows how entirely private and unnoticed his birth had been, even in so small a place. They did find him, however, and his mother and Joseph, for they were still in the village, the number of children born in which, within a short time, could not be great. And now, what could they do when they saw One to whom they had been thus led, but fall down before him, and pay him homage, as indeed the expected Prince? This, therefore, they did, and as it is the custom in the East never to appear before a great person without gifts, to show the honour in which he is held, they opened their chests and brought out what they had carried all the way from their own distant country to present to him, and laid it at his feet. Mary must have wondered at such an act from such persons, for she could not but know, as a Jewess, what it meant. Her Son, in the belief of these strangers, who had been guided to her by a star, was to be not only the King of Israel, but, as such, the Lord of the world!

Herod waited anxiously for the return of the Magi to Jerusalem, hoping to get information which would enable him to kill the infant secretly. But our Lord was not to be thus destroyed. A warning given by God, in a dream, was enough to prevent it; the Magi returning to their own country apparently by crossing from Bethlehem to the steep pass of Engedi, on the Dead Sea, and then passing the Jordan at Jericho; thus avoiding Jerusalem altogether.

Still, Mary and the child were not safe; but a dream sent to Joseph soon put them beyond the reach of the king. Rising by night, in obedience to the vision, and hurriedly setting out, they left Bethlehem secretly, and travelled southwards to Egypt, where they were in no danger. The road lay first to Hebron, through a rough track between grey hills; then westwards over the broad ridge, in the hollow of which Hebron lies, and down a wild pass which, in a few miles, sinks more than 2000 feet, to the low hills which overlook the Philistine plain. They would then go, by Gaza, along the track which runs towards Egypt, a little back from the shore, nearly all the way being barren desert, though not without water enough for the travellers. It would take many days before they reached the banks of the Nile, after passing through a well-guarded gateway in the great wall which was the boundary of the kingdom of Egypt on that side. A tree is still shown at Heliopolis, the ancient On, near Cairo, under which, it is said, Mary and Joseph, with the infant Jesus, rested; but it is not so old as to make this possible.

Egypt had for ages been full of Jews, so that Joseph would have no difficulty in getting a living among his own people, especially as life is very simple in such a climate as that of the Nile or Palestine. Fuel is never required except for cooking, and there is very little of that, the bulk of the people living on fresh or dried fruit, bread and vegetables. Flesh is hardly at all used, except by the well-to-do, and even by them much more sparingly than with us.

CHAPTER VI

CHRIST'S BOYHOOD, AND FIRST VISIT TO JERUSALEM

How long Mary and Joseph remained on the Nile is not told, but they must, it would seem, have been there for quite a long time, as they did not return to the Holy Land till news of the death of Herod had reached them, and this happened, as is believed, in the fourth year after Christ's birth. If—as the fact of Herod's killing the boy-infants of Bethlehem, “from two years old and under,” might seem to imply—Our Lord was of that age when carried off to Egypt by his mother, he must have been about two years amidst the palm groves in the Nile valley, but he may have been longer. At last, however, the fierce old king being dead, Joseph was free to go back to Palestine, and thither, accordingly, he took Mary and her child, setting out with the intention, apparently, of settling in Bethlehem, in which he had last lived. But Judea, Samaria, and Idumea had fallen to the share, after Herod's death, of Archelaus, the coarsest and worst of his sons, and it seemed therefore prudent to go north again to Nazareth, the little town of both Joseph and Mary. Another son of Herod, known as Herod Antipas, reigned there, for Nazareth was in Galilee, which had been handed over to him with the country known as Perea,—“the land beyond (the river)” —on the other side of the Jordan, below the Lake of Galilee. This prince was as crafty as Archelaus was violent; even Christ, afterwards, calling him “a fox.” He was ruler for the whole of Christ's life, and for nine or ten years after his death; but then, at last, he provoked the Emperor Caligula, and was banished to the south of France, the whole of that country being then made Roman territory.

When Christ came back to his mother's town, a little child of about four, the capital of Antipas was at Sepphoris, a place on the top of a strongly fortified, round-topped, fertile height, a few miles north-west from Nazareth, over the hills. After a time, however,



TIBERIAS, AND THE LAKE OF GALILEE.

when Our Lord was a young man of two or three and twenty, the Tetrarch grew discontented with this spot, which was not grand enough for his tastes, and founded the city of Tiberias, as his future residence, calling it after the Emperor Tiberius, who was then reigning.

The site is still inhabited, though the town is now very poor, but in the days of Antipas it grew into a splendid city, with a great palace and citadel, and a glittering circle of courtiers, "in soft clothing,"¹ some of whom Christ must have often seen sailing proudly on the lake in gilded boats, or passing hither and thither on their richly caparisoned horses. But it was long before Tiberias had a Jewish population, as it had been built on the ruins of an older and now unknown city, the tombs connected with which defiled it in the opinion of Israelites. Antipas had, indeed, to bribe people to come and live in it, by giving them free houses and promising not to tax them, and even then could at first only get foreigners to settle in it. Perhaps it was for this reason that we never read of Christ having visited it, though, as I have said, it grew in the end, during his lifetime, to a great and stately city enclosed by a wall three miles long, guarded by forts, and stretched along the shore of the Lake for a mile, offering a splendid sight to him as he passed and repassed on the waters before it.

We are told very little about the childhood of our Lord, but we can picture some features of his early years, from what we know of Jewish life in those times. Mary's grand hymn shows that she was deeply read in the ancient Scriptures of the Old Testament, which then were all the Bible men had. It is not likely that she had a copy of every book it contains, for of course there was as yet no printing, and copies of any book had to be written by hand, which made them very dear. But, no doubt, she had some of the Holy Books, written on thin leather, or on parchment, or on a roll made from the papyrus, or paper reed; the writing stretching in columns, read from the right hand to the left, one after another, the ends of the roll being fastened to light pieces of wood, so that it could be turned from the one round the other as the reader advanced, by the aid of two short handles. Pages were not in use; a book

¹ Matt. xi. 8.

being written in one piece, as far as possible, and hence, if it were a long one, the roll containing it was very thick. That Mary could read her Bible showed that she had been well trained at school, for Hebrew, in which it was written, had not been spoken for several hundred years. Jesus would, no doubt, often hear his mother read what she so much loved, and thus from the very first would be familiar with the Scriptures, nor can there be a reasonable doubt that he learned his letters from them, at her knee. But after a time he would be sent to the village school, which may have been much like one I saw in Cana of Galilee, just over the hill from Nazareth. It was held in a clay-floored little room, the door of which stood open, showing a crowd of little brown children sitting cross-legged on the ground, swaying back and forward as they repeated together a verse from the Koran before their master, an old man in a turban and cotton slip, who also sat cross-legged on the floor. There were no desks or seats, but each child had a kind of unframed slate, apparently of painted wood, on which it wrote the verse as the master dictated. The boys wore red Turkish caps of felt, like mortars, or cotton skull-caps, and had no dress but a little blue cotton smock, which left their throats, legs, and arms bare. In his school Christ would learn parts of the Law, that is, of the Five Books of Moses, by heart, and also how to read and write; but we may be quite sure that the Law was his only school book.

The synagogue or Jewish church would also teach him much, for he would always be there with his mother, not only on Sabbaths, but when she could attend at other times; for it was open every day for prayers. As he sat beside her in the women's part, which was divided from that for men by a thick curtain or a wooden lattice, he would listen to the loud voices repeating the prayers after the Reader, outside, and to the daily lessons from the Law and the Prophets. At the far end he would notice a lamp always burning, and would be told that it hung before the place in the wall in which the "Law"

was kept carefully hidden by a curtain, till taken out for public worship, and that the spaces next this were the "chief seats," occupied by the rulers of the synagogue and the great men of the town. He would turn with his mother and every one else towards Jerusalem during prayers, because God dwelt there in the Holy of Holies, and would thus learn to honour the Holy City before he saw it. He would see the elders and people watching each month for the new moon, the appearance of which brought with it special religious services. Other holy days, also, through the year—the Fast in commemoration of the decree obtained by Haman, to destroy the Jews in Persia—the feast of the Purification of the Temple, when the Syrians had been overcome by Judas Maccabæus; all the houses and the synagogue being then illuminated in token of joy—the feast for the murder of Gedaliah, the Chaldean Governor of Judea, by Ishmael, and that of the great day of Atonement. There would be also cheerful festivals at the return of the Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles, among those in the village who could not go up to Jerusalem. Everything round the growing child would, indeed, in such a household as that of Joseph, breathe of the religion of his people.

At twelve years of age a Jewish boy was regarded as old enough to take on himself the duty of observing the Law, and for this purpose was taken by his parents to the Passover at Jerusalem, after having been solemnly proclaimed a "Son of the Law," at a special gathering of the ancients of the synagogue of his native place. Jesus had grown to be a tall strong child of his years, and showed a wisdom far beyond them, for "the grace of God was on him." It would thus be a great occasion to him when it was proposed that he should go up with Mary and Joseph to the Passover in the Holy City. All the country was in motion at that season, great companies gathering from each district, for good fellowship and safety: much, I dare say, as similar companies may now be seen going up from all parts of the Christian world

to Jerusalem, to celebrate Easter. When I was on the Lake of Galilee such a crowd of pilgrims encamped one evening, beside my tent at Khan Minieh, perhaps the site of the ancient Capernaum, on the upper edge of the famous plain of Gennesaret. It was a beautiful grassy spot, with abundant water, in clear streams, fringed with oleanders, and partly filled with tall reeds. They poured down from the North without any warning, and in a very short time covered the ground with tents, kindled fires, picketed their horses, mules, and asses, and took possession of the place as if they had been there for days. Their slight meals were very soon cooked and eaten, and then the evening passed in rejoicing. Pistols and guns were fired in the air incessantly: circles of hearers gathered round the fires in some of the tents, to listen to stories repeated by some one of their number, while in others, songs were in favour, to the accompaniment of some stringed instrument; all joining loudly, with clapping of hands, in the frequent chorus. Hours were thus spent; but at last many lay down on the open ground, beside their beasts, others on the floor of their tents, until, at last, all were still. Next morning they were gone soon after daybreak, having started so quietly that they did not wake me though they were all round. Pilgrimages to Jerusalem in old times must, I suppose, have been very much like this, except that the blowing of horns would take the place of firing pistols and guns, which were, of course, unknown for many ages after.

The dress of the pilgrims was, we may suppose, very much the same as that of the people in the Holy Land now, for there are no changes of fashions in the East. The men wear turbans or skull-caps, the turban being only a skull-cap with a shawl, or a piece of cotton or a handkerchief, twisted round it. If poor, they have simply a blue cotton shirt, with short sleeves; a leather belt confining it at the waist, and making the upper part into a pocket, in which everything is put by turns; the legs from the knees remaining bare. Besides this, in

cold weather, they have an abba or overcoat, rudely made of thick woollen cloth, generally striped; its shape pretty nearly square, with short sleeves, and the front open, so that it can either be left loose or bound closely.



GIRL OF NAZARETH.

if desired. Richer persons have gaily coloured vests and bright shawls for girdles, with white cotton garments next their person; baggy drawers or breeches of the same material covering their legs; yellow and red slippers without heels, their naked feet. Sandals are seldom

seen now, but were common in the days of Our Lord, consisting simply of a sole tied on by thongs, which passed between the toes, and were fastened round the ankles. Nearly all the peasants and mechanics, however, were then, I should fancy, as they still are, barefooted.

The dress of women in Nazareth is different to some extent from that seen elsewhere in the Holy Land. Though many of the humbler classes wear simply the long blue cotton sack reaching from the neck to the ankles, and hanging loosely enough to permit free stepping, while it shows, not immodestly, the form of the wearer, others rejoice in loose bright-coloured or white-sleeved jackets, and a bright skirt fastened round the ankles, the feet often remaining bare. Sashes of all colours adorn the waist, while the head is covered with a kind of hood when the blue sack is worn, or among the better dressed, by a white or coloured cloth, which hangs down behind; the face, however, being always unveiled, except among the Mahomedans, and many wearing a row of silver coins down each cheek; their only wealth. Such would be the general appearance of the women in the old Jewish pilgrimages. Sleeping, at night, would be little trouble to either sex, as Orientals always lie down in their clothes, covering their head with superstitious care, and contented with any thin mat below them, or even with the ground, in the hot season. It would take four or five days to go from Nazareth to Jerusalem, for no beast in the Holy Land goes faster than at a walk, and there would be many pilgrims on foot. Food for the journey would be a small matter in such a climate; bread, some soft cheese, a little olive oil, some dried figs or raisins, and a bit of salad when it could be got, with a drink of water or sour milk, sufficing for the modest wants of native travellers, even now. Sleeping in the open air, on the way to the Passover, would be no self-denial, for the moon shone bright, and the air was delicious with the first warmth of spring. To cover the head from the

night mist as they lay down beside their fire, if they had not a tent, would be the only precaution taken by the pilgrims.

Jerusalem, especially at the Passover, must have had a wonderful charm for the boy Jesus. Coming from the north, he would enter on the only side where the ground is on a level with the city wall, for everywhere else it sinks into deep valleys. But perhaps he came, on his first visit, by the same road as he took on his last; passing over the Jordan at Beisan, below the east end of the plain of Jezreel, to avoid the "unclean" country of the Samaritans, and then re-crossing at Jericho, and coming westward to the city. In that case he could see all the glory of the Temple from the best point of view, when Mary and Joseph brought him over the path round the shoulder of Mount Olivet, and turned north, towards the Valley of the Kedron. On such a child so grand a view must have made a deep impression, for the Temple rose from the top of Mount Moriah, across the broad ravine, in wondrous splendour. It had been begun by Herod about sixteen years before Christ's birth, and had been consecrated nine and a half years later, so that it was only about twenty years old when he first saw it, and the dazzling whiteness of the great stones of which it was built would be still perfect.¹

The sight round the city would be as wonderful as the city itself; for the multitudes who came to the feast were so great that the valleys on every side, and the slopes of the hills beyond, were covered with the tents of countless pilgrims from every part of the world, with endless differences of dress, language, complexion, and manners. Inside the walls, which ran then, as still, along the edge of the city heights, every foot of open ground would be, at night, the sleeping place of some group; and not only all the houses, but their very roofs

¹ The Temple was not completely finished till about sixty years after Christ's birth; so long was it in building.

would be crowded. Even now, at Easter, great numbers sleep on the stones in the open spaces of the city, lying as closely as they can pack themselves; and the crowds must have been far greater in Christ's day. Yet, somewhere, either inside the gates, or on the slopes around, Mary and Joseph, with the boy Jesus, at last found a resting-place.

CHAPTER VII

THE INCIDENTS OF CHRIST'S FIRST PASSOVER

THE Passover had been instituted to keep Israelites from forgetting the wonderful circumstances attending the deliverance of their forefathers from slavery in Egypt. It had been much neglected in the earlier times of the nation, for the tribes did not observe it during their forty years' wandering, and no mention of it occurs after the time of Joshua, till that of Josiah, just before the downfall of the Kingdom of Judah, and about eight hundred and fifty years after the Exodus.¹ But after the return from Babylon much greater strictness prevailed: every Jew being required to attend the feast, if possible, however far off his home might be from Jerusalem. Indeed, the observance of the Law of Moses as a whole, became a passion with the Jewish race from the time of the Captivity onwards.² The order of "Scribes," whose principal business was to make copies of the sacred writings, gradually became also the trusted teachers of the nation, under the name either of Scribes, Rabbis, or Doctors, that is, teachers of the Law, and by degrees created a wonderful body of rules and ceremonies founded on it. It is hard enough to keep ten commandments, but the Jews had ten thousand, to which constant and strict obedience was demanded, and among these not a few were connected with the feast of the Passover. Each family or company provided its own lamb or young goat from flocks which the Rabbis had pronounced "clean." If the number of the family or company was below ten, they needed to secure guests

¹ Exodus, B.C. 1455. Death of Josiah, B.C. 609.

² The Jews returned to Judea from Babylon in B.C. 536.

to make up that number, for though more might eat of the feast together, fewer could not. Women did not join in it, but only men, and boys of twelve and upwards. The kid or lamb was carried to the Temple on the day of the feast by the chief of each circle of pilgrims, and having been killed by one of the Levites, was skinned, trussed, and handed back to the owner, wrapped in its own skin, which was generally given as a return for any hospitality received during the feast. In the early evening an earthenware oven, partly sunk in the ground, had been heated, and into this the lamb or kid was put with the greatest care, for the Rabbis had a great many rules respecting the roasting, and these must all be observed. No bones were broken, the legs being fastened with skewers of wood which the priests had duly examined beforehand; a long skewer, passing from the head, beyond the end of the body, serving to keep it off the bottom of the oven-pit, while others prevented it touching the sides.

If there were a boy in the company, he was called upon, during the evening, to repeat before all, the story of the first Passover, that he and the others might for ever keep it in mind; and we may easily suppose that this was done by the young Son of Mary when, now, first attending the great solemnity. Rejoicings followed the conclusion of the meal, the whole night being given over, under the bright Passover moon, to all forms of gladness; even the wide Temple grounds being open through that one night to give more space for the happy crowds. Nor was the joy of the season ended with the morning: the entire week was a universal holiday, though numbers began to set off towards home on the day after the feast, without waiting longer in the Holy City.

All the sights of the time must have been so many wonders to Mary's Son. We can fancy him wandering through the rough-paved narrow streets. The arched stone bazaars, with light streaming in only here and there, from openings in the roof, and the sides lined with the small recesses which serve for shops in the East; the

constant flow of many-coloured life through every thoroughfare; the strange dresses, unknown speech, and different ways of the multitudes from all parts, would alike be new to him. Looking to the high ground at the west side of the city, he would be awed by the three great castles rising from the walls of Herod's gardens and palace, and would at least hear of the broad waters, shady trees, endless statues, and noble buildings which these walls enclosed. At the north-west corner of the Temple grounds he would pass under the shadow of the castle in which the Roman garrison was quartered, and must have heard their trumpets and seen their military array. Yet the Temple grounds would be the grandest sight, with their vast crowds; for nearly a quarter of a million of people could find room over the wide level within them.

But the greatest attraction would be the Temple itself, which stood in the southern half of the great enclosure. High over its courts rose the sacred building, splendid in its gilded roof and pinnacles, and in the rich plating of gold over part of its walls. From the great altar in front of it the smoke of sacrifices was continually rising, and on the steps leading from it, Christ would hear the Levites chanting the daily psalms to the music of their instruments, as the worshippers below kneeled with their faces to the Holy of Holies.

Along the sides of the Temple grounds rose great arcades, like broad covered streets; that on the south, known as the Royal Porch, consisting of three aisles, separated by rows of white marble pillars, those in the centre being much higher than the others; that on the east, famous as Solomon's Porch. Outside these, an open space, from twelve to sixteen yards broad, formed, with the arcades themselves, the Court of the Gentiles, that is, the part which foreign converts to the Jewish religion might enter, though it was now filled, in some parts, with sheep and cattle for sacrifices, shops for selling doves for offerings, booths and stalls for the sale of salt and all else needed by pilgrims for the Temple rites, and



HIPPICUS

The last remaining of Herod's Castles, Jerusalem

by the tables of those who gave silver shekels in exchange for the various coins brought by pilgrims from many lands; no foreign coin being received by the priests for the Temple treasury. The lowing of the cattle, the bleating of the sheep, and the noise of buyer and seller must have seemed strange in a place so holy; nor did Jesus forget in after years the impression it now made on his young mind.

But there was one place which had special charms for the boy. The Rabbis, or teachers of the Law, used as schools a number of open chambers which ran along the western wall. Seated like a professor, the "doctor of the Law," sitting on a round cushion, had before him, squatted cross-legged on the floor, a semicircle of old and young, attracted by his discourse on some of the precepts of Moses; full liberty being given and taken of interrupting his instructions by questions, and seeking the truth by friendly discussion. Not seldom a number of Rabbis attended, sitting beside the Master who presided, and giving their opinion freely where difficulty arose.

That a country boy of twelve should turn aside from all other attractions of such a time, and find his delight in the discussion of questions about the Law, must have seemed extraordinary. But that he should be so skilled in the sacred writings, and so original and thoughtful, as to take an active part, both in putting questions to the doctors of the Law, and answering theirs when they had given what he held insufficient replies, must have seemed stranger still. This, however, was his special enjoyment. Leaving his mother and Joseph, who could trust one so grave and thoughtful, alone, even in the crowded city, he made his way each morning to the schools, and spent the day in them, the most eager and intelligent of the scholars.

At last the time came for the Virgin and Joseph to join Nazareth pilgrims now returning home. Families could not keep together in the crowd: and there is always therefore a stopping place, a few miles out, to see

that all is right—that nothing has been left behind, and that all the members of the company are present. The band among whom Joseph and Mary were to travel, had thus set out and come to their first halt, when, to their alarm, Mary and her husband found that Jesus was not to be seen. Nothing remained but to return to Jerusalem to find him. But even in the city all inquiries were for a time vain. Mary and Joseph were in great trouble. Could anything have happened to him? As a last hope, the Temple schools were searched, though, had they known what kind of boy he was, they would have gone there first. It was only on the third day that their alarm was ended. To their astonishment he was then found sitting on the ground before the Rabbis, hearing them, and asking them questions, in return, so acutely, that all were amazed. “Son,” said Mary, “why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I sought thee sorrowing.” But he had an answer ready, which must have seemed very strange from one so young. “How is it,” he asked, “that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be in my Father’s house?”¹ So early did he look up to God as especially his Father; so early was his Father’s house the place, where, as a matter to be taken for granted, he might have been known to find his home.

¹ Revised Version.

CHAPTER VIII

CHRIST'S EARLY MANHOOD AT NAZARETH

OF the eighteen years of our Saviour's life that followed we know nothing, for he was about thirty when he next appears in the story of the Gospels. During all that time he passed his days so quietly that Nathanael, at Cana of Galilee, just over the hill from Nazareth, never heard of him, or at most, had only known him among the rest of the villagers. He would at an early age begin to help Joseph in his humble workshop, for the neighbours knew him in after years as "the carpenter."¹ Idleness was contrary to his nature, so that we may be quite sure he earned his daily bread by his own labour as early as he could. Nor was there anything degrading in this, among the Jews. The Rabbis, after studying in the schools, usually followed some ordinary trade, for they knew the Law by heart, and could ponder it word by word when engaged in some everyday calling. Of those famous in Christ's day, or later, some were millers, others carpenters, cobblers, tailors, bakers, builders, money-changers, scribes, curriers, or smiths. Beyond the Law and the Prophets they knew nothing from books, for all other writings were regarded as either useless or sinful; religious writings excepted, which they held as almost sacred, though not included in the Scriptures. It was by thinking rather than by reading that one in the end became a Rabbi, and any person of good abilities, whatever his position, could think.

One who as a boy of twelve had already shown so extraordinary an interest in religion, could not fail to devote himself more and more to it, as one of a race

¹ Mark vi. 3.

with whom their religious books were the one great subject of thought and study. Josephus, the historian, tells us that his countrymen were, as a whole, so deeply versed in their Scriptures that any Jewish boy could repeat the Law, throughout, by heart, without missing a word, and almost equal zeal was shown in learning the words of the Prophets and other sacred writers. That it was the same with Christ is seen in the fact that twenty-seven references to the Old Testament are made by him in the Gospels, so that he must have known them with wonderful completeness to be able to quote from them by memory from so many parts, in his ordinary conversation. He had evidently, indeed, pondered them earnestly, as well as learned their words, working out for himself, directly, from the Law and the Prophets, his own thoughts, so that when he became a public Teacher, he "spoke with authority," as an independent thinker, and did not content himself, like the Scribes, or Rabbis, with repeating what others had said. For no Rabbi ever ventured to speak without supporting his words by those of some other Rabbi, of an earlier day.

Other influences on Christ's future life would be derived from watching men and nature around him. Many hills, bare and white, offering at best only thin pasture, rise on all sides of Nazareth, with long easy slopes and softly rounded tops. Amidst these he could wander where he chose, with no one to hinder his thoughts or devotions. There are no ravines or shady woods, for all except a few valleys are bare of trees; but he could look away to the mountains of Samaria on the south, the Carmel range and the Bay of Acre on the west, and the mountains beyond Jordan on the east, while on the north, the snowy top of Hermon glittered far up in the sky. In the town itself he would doubtless study the groups that passed up or down its few narrow, lane-like streets, or to and fro over the open space below the houses, where the one fountain of the town poured out its waters. There, from the days when he went with his mother in childhood, morning and

evening, on her constant journeys, with her earthenware pitcher on her head or shoulder, to get the water for her household, he had seen the villagers busy in pleasant gossip, and had often lingered beside encampments of passing traders and travellers. A rough, broken line of olive trees, and hedges of prickly pear, still marks the wide limits of this part of the village common, and there, as of old, travellers pitch their tents, children play, and camels and flocks rest till they are watered. The houses of the town stretch far up the slope, hardly in streets, but very much at random; the roadway, such as it is, winding hither and thither among them. Their flat roofs are a favourite lounging-place in the warm evenings of summer, and it would be the same in Christ's days. Probably then, as now, the village mechanics had their work-places chiefly in the lower part of the town. Joseph's trade would be carried on as that of the local carpenter is still, in a small shop, with bare stone walls and an arched stone roof, timber being scarce. It might have a small bench, but some carpenters' shops have only a plank fixed on the floor, beside which the workman sits, cross-legged, planing or sawing. All Orientals, indeed, habitually sit on the ground, whether in the open air or within doors. In Christ's day, as now, there would be some barbers, grocers, blacksmiths, and other craftsmen or shopkeepers needed in a small community, and the village mothers and grown daughters would do their washing with tucked-up garments and bare feet, in the pool before the fountain. It was a small world in which to live, but to a mind like that of Our Lord, it would give abundant material for thought, in his daily life. The herdsman, the passing Arab with his long spear, the local grandee in fine robes, at times would vary the scene. Nor did he forget what he had thus seen, for in the Gospels he speaks of the games of childhood, the village feast, the marriage procession, the wail of the mourner, the burial of the dead, the soft clothing of courtiers, the purple and fine linen of the rich and the rags of the poor, the arts of the wily steward

of a rich man's grounds, the travelling merchant with his pearls, the debtor dragged off to prison, the toil of the sower and of labourers in the vineyard, and much else, from time to time noted in his quiet mountain village.

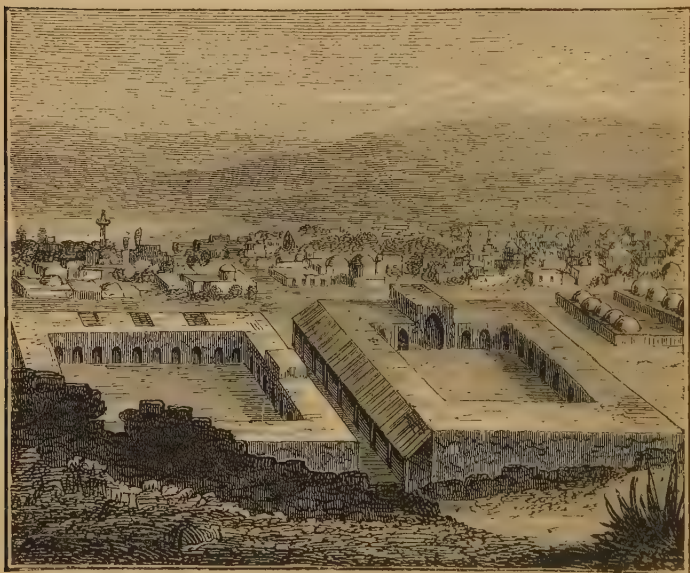
Nor did the hills and their little valleys fail to enrich his mind. We see in his parables how he noticed the lilies of the field and the grass on the slopes. The hen, gathering her chickens under her wings from the shadow of the approaching hawk; the birds living without care on the bounty of their heavenly Father; the sheep and lambs following the shepherd, but sometimes wandering and lost; the black goats feeding apart from their white-fleeced companions; the dogs, so common in Eastern towns; the foxes that lived in the holes of the rocks; the nests in the orchards; the sailing of the clouds; the music of the rain; the rush of the winter torrent; the roar of the tempest; the fall of the house built on the sands, were all laid up in his thoughts.

But though the feeling of the Nazareth people was strongly Jewish, the air of Galilee made men strangely different from the people of the south. In Judea, the nearness of Jerusalem and the Temple, with its schools of the Rabbis, created a dark narrowness of mind and heart too proud and fierce to be capable of instruction or enlightenment. In the north, on the contrary, men were more easily moved, and while as true to the faith, were kindlier and more frank than the scowling Jew of the Holy City. Perhaps the pleasantness of the region, compared with Judea, affected the character of its people, for the hills north of Nazareth are green, not grey, like those round Jerusalem, the landscapes are nobler, the plains richer, and high in the northern heavens rises the huge mass of the Mountains of Lebanon; their highest summit about ten thousand feet above the sea. There was more of the trader about the southern Jew; more of the countryman about the Galilean. The free bracing air of his hills, moreover, made him proverbially brave and independent. The southern Jew was restless and

troublesome under his Roman masters ; but the Galilean rose from time to time in active rebellion, and dared all in the open field, or in the fastnesses of his hills. The Galilean was manlier than the southern Jew ; more outspoken, less given up to a slavish worship of the letter of his faith ; more open to be stirred by its spirit.

That they were often brought into contact with other races may also have helped to make the Galileans what they were. The trade of Western Asia and Damascus passed, to a large extent, over the plain of Jezreel, to reach which it had to thread its way along the roads of the province, from Lebanon, southwards. Long caravans of camels laden with wheat, fruit, glass, pottery, carpets, and much else, constantly crossed the plain of El Battauf, behind Nazareth, on the way to the port of Ptolemais, now known as Acre, and similar strings of these ungainly creatures were still more common on the great plain. The Galilean was familiar with the sight of them, tied beast behind beast, in long heavy-laden strings, the conductor sitting aloft on the hump of the first camel, or riding before, on an ass. Near Nazareth were great khans, or halting-places for caravans—large buildings enclosing an open space, with a well in its centre, while arches along the side provided store room for the loads, after they had been taken from the kneeling animals, and other chambers, above, furnished shelter by night for the men in charge of them, or for passing travellers. Galileans often mingled with the crowd of Syrians, Arabs, Greeks, and Phœnicians, whom this great trade employed, and must have learned to feel more kindly to other races than the Jew by doing so. They were not far, moreover, from the great heathen communities of Tyre and Sidon, the smoke of whose dye-vats and glass furnaces was to be seen from many a western Galilean hill. And beyond these, a still stronger influence in widening the mind was afforded by gleams of the great sea, traversed in those days by countless sails, which spoke of other lands and unknown peoples. All this could not fail to affect the opening mind of Our Lord,

and to increase that "wisdom" which those around him marked. But, above all, his relations to his heavenly Father, close and tender beyond what we can conceive, must have raised him above all that was narrow and unworthy, filling his soul with a boundless love to his fellow-men, as, alike, children of the great Father in



EASTERN KHANS.

heaven, towards whom his own thoughts were continually rising.

It is said that Joseph died when Christ was eighteen years old, and it seems at least certain that he did not live till our Lord began his public teaching, as he is not mentioned in the Gospels after the opening chapters.

From the time of his death, it is said that Jesus supported his mother by his daily work; other members of the household, of course, assisting. Four "brothers," and at least two "sisters" are mentioned. The names of the "sisters" are not given, but those of the "brothers" were James, Joseph, Simon, and Jude. Of three of these we know little beyond what is told in the Gospels. James, who was afterwards the head of the Church at Jerusalem, was a Nazarite from his childhood, vowed to God by his parents, and pledged never to let his hair be cut, or to taste wine; and he was a martyr in his old age. Simon is said to have become head of the Church in the Holy City after the death of James; and Jude, we are told, left descendants who were brought before the Emperor Domitian¹ as belonging to the family of David, and thus, perhaps, dangerous claimants of the Jewish throne. But the emperor soon found he had nothing to fear from them. Demanding if they were of the race of the great Jewish king, they frankly told him they were. He then asked what property they had and how much money, but they answered that they owned between them less than three hundred pounds,² and this, not in coin, but in thirty-nine acres of land, from which they paid their taxes, supporting themselves by their labour. As a proof of this they showed the emperor their hands, which were hard and rough with daily toil. Domitian then asked them some questions about Christ, and after hearing their answers, sent them away as simple people whom it was not worth while to trouble.

¹ Domitian reigned from A.D. 81 till his murder in A.D. 96. He succeeded his brother Titus, the conqueror of Jerusalem, both being sons of Vespasian.

² 9000 denarii.

CHAPTER IX

THE PREACHING OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

It is hard to imagine the state of things amidst which Our Lord and his herald, John the Baptist, grew up. Peace could be kept among the Jews only by iron sternness on the part of the Romans, and even in spite of their severity the spirit of revolt continually sputtered into flame. At Juttah, or Hebron, the child John would be familiar from his boyhood with this restless agitation of all minds, for every one was disturbed by it, and its wild outbreaks excited the south of the land as much as it did the people of Nazareth and the north.

The death of Herod, when Our Lord was four or five years old, had been the signal for a rising of the people against their hated rulers. They demanded that Archelaus, the late king's son, should at once head the nation against the Romans, and the tumult was only quelled after the massacre of three thousand men in the streets of Jerusalem. Archelaus then set sail for Rome, to plead with the emperor that he should be king instead of his father, but his brother Antipas wished the throne for himself, and started for the court of the emperor at the same time, to get the better of his brother if he could. They were not alone, however, for fifty Jews were sent to beg that a Roman governor should be appointed instead of either. Many years after, Jesus needed no names to make it known whom he meant when he spoke of a king against whom his people cried, before a foreign throne, that they would not have this man to rule over them.¹

Archelaus came back ruler of Idumea, south of Judea,

¹ Luke xix. 12-14.

Judea itself, and Samaria, which made him the richest of the sons of Herod. But terrible scenes had taken place in the Holy Land during his absence. Jerusalem, then full of strangers coming to the feast of Pentecost, had risen against the Roman garrison, who cut them down without mercy. Crowds on the flat roofs of the chambers built against the walls of the great Temple enclosure, rained down a storm of missiles on the soldiers, till at last, finding it impossible to drive back their enemies, the Romans set fire to the whole line of these buildings, the destruction of which left the Temple itself at their mercy. The sacred treasury, which was enormously rich, was forthwith plundered, but this only infuriated the people still more. Herod's regiments, largely Jews, went over to them, and sallied forth to the open country, creating the greatest disorder.

Across the Jordan, a former slave of Herod put himself at the head of a vast multitude who called him king, and hoped to deliver their country by his aid. Betaking themselves to the wild gorges on the road between Jerusalem and Jericho, they carried fire and sword to the homes of all who did not favour them, and burned to the ground the famous palace of Herod, at Jericho. But the Romans soon crushed them.

In the same region, a little later, a gigantic shepherd put himself at the head of the excited people, and held out for years against the troops sent to put him down; so well did the population support him.

Another insurrection broke out in Galilee, under one known as Judas the Galilean, son of one Hezekiah, who had raised a fierce revolt many years before, and had been crushed with terrible slaughter by Herod. Father and son had the same object—to restore the land to Jehovah as its rightful king, by driving out the Romans and setting up the authority of the heads of the Jewish Church. Sepphoris, then the capital of the province, was taken, and a supply of arms and much money secured. But it was recaptured, after a time, by the Romans; the town burnt to the ground, and its inha-

bitants carried off to distant parts and sold as slaves. Round Jerusalem two thousand of the prisoners were crucified at the sides of the different roads, as was the Roman custom, that the lesson might be seen by every passer-by.

There was now comparative quiet for some years, in one of which Our Lord, as a boy of twelve, came up to Jerusalem with Joseph and the Virgin Mary. But worse trouble soon broke out. An attempt to ascertain the number of the population and the wealth of the country rekindled the flame of insurrection, for it seemed to the Jews, on the one hand, an affront to God, who had promised that Israel would be like the sand on the sea-shore, *which cannot be numbered*, and on the other, a defiance of His will, since David's numbering their ancestors had been punished as a grievous sin.

The deadly hatred to the Romans doubled these alarms. If the people were numbered the taxes would be increased, though, already, it was keenly discussed whether it was lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar, at all, or not. The country, moreover, had become so impoverished that even existing taxes bore heavily on the bulk of the people. Tax-gatherers, known as "publicans," swarmed everywhere. Wealthy men, or commercial companies at Rome, paid so much to the treasury for the privilege of collecting the imposts in a province, which they then subdivided into districts, the right to collect the taxes in which they sold to the highest bidder, who, again, often sub-let his portion to smaller contractors, so that a number of middlemen stood between the emperor and the taxpayer, each eager to make as much as he could from those over whom he had power. Hence, abuses abounded. Far more was demanded than was just, but there was no help, for the very judges were either members of some tax-farming "company," or themselves farmed the taxes, or were bribed by those who did so.

So loud indeed had the popular murmurs latterly become, that, when Our Lord was about twenty-four

years of age, the nephew of the Emperor Tiberius was sent to the Holy Land to try to remedy matters.

Amidst this widespread distress, one thought filled all hearts. God had promised to send a Messiah to deliver His people, and this Mighty One must surely come, now that the cup of Israel's misery was so full! Tolls, house tax, excise, market tax, head tax, salt tax, crown tax, and custom dues, had drained the country of money, and had left hardly the poorest living for its people. The whole land heaved with discontent, and every popular leader who rose was, in turn, supposed to be the long and eagerly expected Messiah.

In Christ's early years, Judas the Galilean had reappeared, calling the nation to arms against the Romans. He was a true follower of the ancient Zealots,¹ whose creed is summed up in the words of an early Jewish book, "Whoever takes on him the yoke of the Law is no longer under that of man," a creed which made them the deadly foe of every government but that of the Jewish Law. Judas now raised the cry, "No Lord but Jehovah; no tax but to the Temple; no friend but a Zealot," and the youth of the country rallied to his standard. Fire and sword presently wasted the land. The country-house of the rich Sadducee, and the ricks and barns of the well-to-do friend of Rome, everywhere went up in flames.

From the hills round Nazareth, Jesus, as a growing boy, must have seen, daily, the smoke of burning villages, and in Joseph's cottage, as in all others of the land, every heart must have beat fast, at the hourly news of some fresh story of blood. But the insurrection was ere long suppressed, Judas dying in the struggle. The terrible story, however, was never forgotten. Many years after, Gamaliel could remind the authorities, how "the Galilean drew away much people after him, but perished, and as many as obeyed him were dispersed."²

It was amidst times like these that John the Baptist,

¹ 1 Mac. ii. 22, 50; 2 Mac. iv. 2.

² Acts v. 37.

as well as Our Lord, grew up. The son of a priest, and of pure priestly descent on his mother's side also, John began life with every advantage. The best society was open to him, and the influences of his home formed in him a noble and godly character. He grew up subject to a strictly Jewish training; the feasts and fasts of the Law, its Sabbaths and new moons, its ten thousand rules about eating and drinking, furniture, dress, dishes, conversation, reading, travelling, meeting, parting, buying, selling, cooking, the washing of pots, cups, tables, and person, with much else, being zealously observed by his father and mother, for they walked in all the ordinances and commandments of the Rabbis blamelessly.

Destined, as the son of a priest, himself to minister, in due time, in the Temple, he doubtless often went to the Holy City with his father. The crowds of pilgrims at the great feasts, the sacrifices at the altar, with its turbaned, white-robed, bare-footed priests; the music of the bands and choirs of Levites, and the splendour of the Temple itself, would be familiar to him, and help to mould his nature. Every one is influenced by the little world in which he moves, and John from infancy was surrounded by all that could make it his pride and delight to be a Jew in the strictest sense.

Outward strictness, however, was united in the case of John, as it was in his parents, with a truly devout and religious nature. Men spoke of him, indeed, as "filled with the Holy Ghost from his birth," and his manhood was in keeping with the godliness of his youth. Full of love for his nation, but shocked by their religious shortcomings, his idea of preparation for the Messiah was very different from that which found favour with the masses. Of outward religion there was abundance; that of the heart was sadly rare. He would restore Israel by leading it back to the favour of God, through sincere repentance; confident that only when they thus humbled themselves the Almighty would once more visit His people.

His future life was, no doubt, very much biassed by the fact that his parents, before his birth, made a vow that he should all his life be a Nazarite, or one given up to God. By this vow he was required to abstain altogether, while he lived, from wine and every other intoxicating drink; even vinegar or any syrup or preparation of the grape, and the grape itself, being forbidden him; as if total abstinence from wine and the like were so necessary for a high religious life, that the remotest temptation to use them should be avoided. No razor was to come on the head of the Nazarite, though it was the custom of all round, then as now, to shave the head for coolness. He was to be "holy to God" and to let his hair grow untouched even by scissors; perhaps as a constant sign of his having taken the Nazarite vow.¹ To guard against any legal uncleanness, which could not be permitted in one vowed to God, he was not to go near a dead body, even if it were that of his father, mother, brother, or sister, and if, in spite of all care, he became "defiled," by any chance, from this cause, he was required to shave his head and begin his vow afresh, after having remained seven days "unclean," and presenting an offering as a token of his "trespass."

But though thus marked by a special separation to God, it was not intended that John should grow up a monk—withdrawing from men,² for he might still live among his fellows as a husband, father, and citizen. Many persons, however, even not Nazarites, at that time, retired from society to the wilderness, as John himself did, in after years. Zeal for the Law led numbers to devote their whole lives to its observance, so that the bare hills on which John looked down towards the East, from Juttah, were already, before his day, the home of brotherhoods of hermits living in cells in the rocks, still seen in great numbers, tier over tier, amidst scenes of unspeakable weird desolation. These called themselves Essenes, or "the pious," and gave themselves up to rigid

¹ Num. vi. 1-22.

² A monk means "one who lives alone."

self-denial in every way, that they might escape the danger of any failure in working out "the righteousness which is of the Law." Besides their colonies, which met daily for meals and religious exercises, there were, moreover, many lonely hermits, living in the depths of the hills, with no food but such as these solitudes yielded, and no aim in life but communion with God and meditation on the things of religion.

It is not, therefore, strange that such a one as John should have been led by the example of so many, especially as he was a Nazarite, to betake himself to a solitary life of meditation and prayer in the wilderness.

From the hills round Juttah the landscape to the east sinks in great steps towards the Dead Sea, the surface of which lies more than four thousand feet below, though only about twenty miles off. Bare hills of yellow or grey limestone fill the horizon, which water-torrents and earthquakes have rent, in every direction, with gullies, ravines, or narrow clefts, only known to robbers, or to shepherds wandering with their flocks in search of thin spots of green. The grasshopper, the bee, and the viper are almost the only life to be seen, and tufts of aromatic herbs in the chinks of the hills or among the stones, the only vegetation. There could be no region more forbidding. The sun glares from white rocks with blinding and scorching brightness; water is to be found only in rare springs, or in holes in the dry bed of the winter torrent, and silence as of death reigns night and day.

In some rough cavern in this desert John took up his abode; his only food the locusts which abounded, and the honey of the wild bees, found here and there in the clefts of the rocks; his only drink the water these yielded. Locusts are still eaten by the very poor in some parts of the East, after having been thrown into boiling water with which salt has been mixed, and then dried in the sun. The head, legs, and wings are torn off, and the rest is used as food. They were "clean" under the Law of Moses, so that John, though a strict Jew, was at liberty to eat them. The wild bees of the

Holy Land are very common, swarming freely in the chinks of the dry limestone rocks, which afford them shelter and protection for their combs.

It is not difficult to picture the Baptist in this wild retirement. His black hair, like that of Samson, must have hung down his back and cheeks all the length it had grown from his birth. A shirt-like covering of camel's hair cloth—much resembling coarse flannel—was his only dress; a narrow belt of leather, such as the poorest still wear, keeping it to his body. He may have worn sandals, that is the soles of shoes with no uppers, but it is quite as likely that he went about barefooted, as most of the Arabs do at this day. His head, if covered by anything except his thick hair, would be protected by a large kerchief, folded three-cornered, so that the ends fell over his breast and back; a rope of soft camel's hair round his brow keeping it in its place. Exposure to the weather and the meagreness of his food must have made him gaunt and hollow-eyed, but the fire of his intense earnestness would light up his face all the more strikingly. Josephus gives a sketch of a similar recluse of the desert with whom he himself lived for three years. His only clothing was the bark or leaves of trees, his only food the wild berries, or roots of the hills and gorges, his only drink the springs of the rocks. Morning and evening he bathed in cold water, to guard against any possible legal impurity.

Zacharias and Elizabeth, if still alive, must have felt it bitterly when their son, from whom they had hoped so much, left their quiet home, to bury himself in this terrible hermit life. But his heart was sad, and drove him forth from among men.

For the sorrows of the nation pressed on the heart of John, and so, also, did their sins. God had forsaken them only because they had first forsaken Him. The courts of His temple had been turned into a market for the changing of money, and the sale of birds and beasts for sacrifice, and other trading. Still worse, these hucksters and money-changers had so vile a name that

men said they had made it a den of thieves.¹ The priests, Scribes, and Rabbis might also, in too many cases, be branded as little better than the vipers of the desert. So fallen was the glory of Israel that the high-priest had been changed nine times during the early life of John, at the will of Archelaus or of a heathen governor from Rome. The wearers of the turban, on which was borne the inscription, "Holiness to Jehovah," had been too often shameful for violence, luxury, ungodliness. Nor were the people innocent, for Jesus denounced them, a year or two later, as an evil and adulterous generation, more hardened and hopeless than the men of Nineveh, or even of Sodom and Gomorrah.

The prospects of Israel being thus dark and fallen, earnest souls could only look to the heavens! Might not national repentance be awakened, that God might return, and visit the land in mercy? Surely, also, the Messiah must be close at hand, and what preparation so fit for his appearing as lowly self-denial, betaking itself to prayer and watching, in the solitudes of the desert, where nothing earthly came between the soul and God? The Rabbis, themselves, had taught that the Messiah could not come till Israel had prepared itself for him, by penitence and humiliation of heart, and the whole soul of the Baptist was absorbed in the effort to bring this about.

In the rugged wilderness around him, the lonely man was gradually convinced that the one way to accomplish his end was by his going forth to his nation, and trying to rouse them; nor could any one have been more fitted to awake the sleeping conscience of his people. To rebuke the love of riches would have been idle had he lived in comfort, nor would he have carried weight in assailing the insincerity and wickedness of the day, if he could have been suspected of either. But men feel the power of one whose life is in keeping with his words. It was clear to all that he was intensely in earnest.

¹ Mark xi. 17,

Religion, in the mass of men, had become a thing of forms, but it was evident that, with John at least, it was a living reality.

In his long years of hermit-life the new prophet had pored over the writings of the ancient Prophets, and learnt from them that righteousness of the heart and life was of far higher worth in the sight of God, than the round of offerings, sacrifices, and rites to which his nation trusted. Although a strict Jew, he never mentions the great lawgiver, but the few words left us from his preaching show that he had drunk deeply into the spirit of Isaiah. Like him, he speaks of the trees of God's vineyard, the brood of vipers, the felling of the barren tree, the consuming fire, the threshing-floor, the winnowing shovel, and the feeding and clothing of the poor.¹ Nor could his very appearance fail in impressing his fellow-countrymen, for the same dress and long hair marked the old prophets, while his strange retired life, recalled that of Elijah, the greatest of them all.²

The solemn stillness of the hills, and the boundless sweep of the daily and nightly heavens, had raised the soul of the Baptist above any fear of man. What was the greatest human power before the Maker of Heaven and Earth—the Rock of Israel? It might seem hopeless to expect deliverance from the Romans, but if Israel could only be turned from their sins to lead a new life, the blessing of the Almighty would shine down upon them, and the thunders of His judgments break on their foes. Such repentance would bring the Messiah. It had been revealed that he, himself, was to go before the Expected One, in the spirit and power of the great prophet Elijah, to make ready a people prepared for him.³ The call of God rang in his soul like a trumpet, to go forth and preach to His people the approach of

¹ Isa. lix. 5; v. 7; xxviii. 28; x. 15; xxi. 10; xl. 24; i. 31; ix. 18; x. 17; v. 24; xlvii. 14; xxi. 10; xxviii. 27; xxx. 24; xli. 15.

² 2 Kings i. 8. Here the words cannot mean that he was clad in a hairy skin, for the sheep-skin coats of the East are not hairy, but woolly.

³ Luke i. 17.

the Anointed of the Lord, with grace for the contrite, but in wrath on the ungodly. He resolved to go out to the crowds of men, rebuking the lofty and proud, sparing no sin, raising up the humble and oppressed, and cheering the contrite, that he might make all ready for the appearance of the Christ.¹

The place chosen by John for his first appearance in public was on the banks of the river Jordan, near the city of Jericho, where the river is from ninety to a hundred feet broad, and can be forded easily, except during the spring, autumn, and winter floods. A plain, about six miles across, reaches from the foot of the hills of Judea to the banks of the stream; gradually sloping from about six hundred feet to nearly the level of the water. On the eastern side, also, there is an open shelving space of two or three miles, from the stream to the mountains of Moab. This wide sweep is, in our day, uninhabited, except by a few wretched Arabs at the modern village of Jeriha, which is a mere collection of miserable hovels. Here and there, small parts of the soil, near the springs that burst from the hills, are planted with beans, maize, or other growths; but these fields and patches belong to peasants from Judea or Moab, who come down in the spring and autumn to plant and reap them, paying tribute to the Arabs for the use of the land. Except at these times the whole space is almost uninhabited, nor could one conceive a more vivid picture of desolation than it presents. Near the wasted rush of fountains which once made the whole landscape fertile, there is a fringe of bushes, but over all the rest, seamed here and there with the rough beds of winter torrents, you find only tufts of wilderness plants scattered over the dry, stony mud under foot. The edge of the river itself, indeed, still vindicates the ancient fertility of the district by a dense belt of trees, growing on a terrace many feet beneath the level of the plain, but above the still lower current of the stream. As in John's day, beds

¹ Christ, like Messiah, means the Anointed,



VIEW ON PLAIN OF JERICHO

of tall reeds line the water's edge in many places, and afford, with the thickets above, a shelter to wild boars, and a nesting place for innumerable birds.

Nineteen hundred years ago the scene was very different. The city of Jericho was the Brighton of the rich men of Jerusalem, both priests and laity; great mansions and palaces looked out from amidst the richest gardens, and a teeming population filled the whole landscape. Every foot of the soil was under the plough or the spade; palm trees waved in hundreds, and the whole scene was richly fertile. The road between east and west ran through Jericho, so that its ford was the crossing place of all travellers and merchandise; in taking the Roman excise and customs from which, a great staff of publicans found occupation.

There could thus be no better place for finding crowds of hearers, and no preacher could more certainly have arrested their attention than the Baptist. His thin figure—the proof of his self-denial and wilderness fare, his lamp-like eyes, full of glowing energy, his long hair, uncut for thirty years—the mark of a Nazarite—his rough tunic or shirt of camel's wool—the sackcloth of the country, and the recognised public symbol of mourning—bound at the waist by a poor leathern belt—made him look, as I have said, like one of the ancient prophets, for they are represented in the sacred writings as having been thus clad.¹

These old prophets had been the fearless preachers of their day, and John resembled them in their manly boldness. He startled the people by demanding the repentance of all, if they would escape the approaching wrath. The Kingdom of Heaven—that is, the earthly reign of God as the King of Israel—was at hand, and would bring with it awful terrors to the impenitent. He seems to have expected that God was about to set up His power in Jerusalem and drive out the Romans, making the Jews lords of the land, for even the apostles

¹ 2 Kings i. 8; Rev. xi. 3; Zech. xiii. 4; 2 Kings vi. 30; Job xvi. 15; 1 Kings xxi. 27.

thought this, asking Christ so late as after the Resurrection, if he would "at that time restore again the Kingdom"—that is, national glory—"to Israel."¹ We must not fancy that John was so far ahead of his age as to have understood how very different Christ's Kingdom was to be, from what they expected in that of the Messiah. To him the Jews were God's own people, and the Holy Land His inheritance, over which He was to reign, through His Anointed One, as truly as earthly kings over their dominions; His Law, the statute book of the nation, for both public and private life. But John neither played the part of a political agitator, nor laid stress on rites or sacrifices as saving. He was far too much in earnest. He demanded a spiritual reformation. The life must be worthy of the professed servants of a Holy God. Sin was hateful to the Almighty. He was of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.² They must "cease to do evil and learn to do well,"³ and as a pledge of their doing so, must confess with shame their unworthiness in the past.

The conscience of the masses was roused. Crowds flocked to the new preacher, so unlike the sleek priests or Rabbis, or the self-satisfied Pharisees, to whom they were accustomed. Popular excitement spread. Multitudes streamed from the farthest parts of the land, to hear one so much in earnest. His soul was filled with horror at the wickedness of the times. It seemed as if it must bring on them the awful day of the Lord, of which the prophets had spoken, when the divine indignation would burn as an oven, and the proud and the wicked should be as stubble, and be burnt up till there was left neither root nor branch.⁴ Like Malachi, however, he held out the assurance that to those who feared the name of the Lord, the Sun of Righteousness should arise, with healing in his wings.

For those who were moved to a new life by his words, the Baptist introduced a striking rite, not, indeed, un-

¹ Acts i. 6.

² Is. i. 16.

³ Hab. i. 13.

⁴ Mal. iv. 1.

known before, but never used so freely. Having openly confessed their sins and promising to live better lives, they were baptized in the Jordan, as a sign that they desired to have their hearts cleansed by true reformation, from the sin of the past, as their bodies were by the waters. The Jordan had always been regarded as a sacred stream, since the day when its waters were divided to let Israel pass over dry shod, and in later times bathing in it had removed the leprosy of Naaman. But no excuse was given for any one thinking that his merely being baptized was enough, for we know from Josephus, in the next generation, that John spoke of baptism as a symbol which had no meaning when "the soul had not been cleansed beforehand by righteousness."

Yet he did not leave his converts to their own unaided efforts after a nobler life. Jesus, "The Lamb of God" who should take away the sin of the world, stood ere long before him, and to the Jew such a name spoke of a sacrifice with which God would be well pleased.

It was not wonderful that such a preacher, with such a message, stirred the hearts of the whole nation. Men honour one who fearlessly braves all on behalf of the truth. The workman and the peasant left their callings; the keen trader, the Roman tax-gatherer, the foreign legionary, and the soldier of the country, sought the banks of the Jordan. Every class and rank was represented in the crowds that pressed round the prophet. Haughty Rabbis, dignified priests, long-robed Pharisees, cold Sadducees, cautious Levites, grey-haired elders of the people, rich farmers, poor labourers in their blue shirts, and even the rough and morally sunken of both sexes, came from town and country, to listen. Even the authorities of the Schools and Temple in Jerusalem felt it necessary to make inquiries respecting him. That he had no licence from them as a public teacher was quite irregular, for they claimed authority over all who sought to instruct the people in religion. Some priests and Levites of the Pharisee party were, therefore, sent to ask him what he claimed to be. Did he wish to

be thought the Messiah, or the prophet Elijah, whom some expected to appear before the Messiah, or was he some old prophet, perhaps Jeremiah, risen from the dead, for whom others looked, as the herald of the Anointed One? But John was above any unworthy pretence. With the whole nation ready to follow him in wild revolt against the Romans, he quietly and humbly replied that "he was only the voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as said the prophet Esaias."¹

Meanwhile, the prophet, weird and wild in his appearance, was preaching day by day to the still increasing multitudes. Cold prudence or timid caution had no place in his soul. Israel, he cried, was now a barren fruit tree, ready for felling, and the axe was already at its roots. Timely repentance and the bringing forth good fruit might ward off its fall, but without these, it would be cut down and thrown into the fire. It was like a great threshing-floor, heaped with mounds of mingled chaff and wheat, but the winnowing shovel was at hand, to toss both high against the wind, that the wheat might be gathered into the barn, and the chaff blown apart, to be swept up in the end and burnt with unquenchable fire. Yet there was no reason to despair, for one mightier than he was close at hand, for whom he was unworthy, in his own esteem, to perform the slave's service of unloosing and removing his sandals. This great one would baptize them, not like himself, with mere water, but with the Holy Ghost and with fire; the Holy Ghost to kindle in them heavenly grace, if penitent; fire, to burn them up, if the reverse. It would do them no good that they were Israelites in name, unless they lived worthy lives. They thought that preparation for the Messiah meant having a stout heart to fight the Romans: he proclaimed that the only true preparation was to turn to God.²

Nor did he content himself with speaking in a vague way against sin, but fearlessly denounced the faults of

¹ John i. 19-24.

² Matt. iii. 10-12.

classes and individuals. "Ye brood of vipers," he cried, to a crowd of self-satisfied Pharisees and Sadducees, who had come to sneer, "who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" That they were exposed to divine anger had never entered their minds, for had they not kept all the commands of the Rabbis and were they not Jews? That they were "sons of Abraham," the friend of God, made them, they thought, safe. But John scattered such ideas to the winds. "Begin not to say within yourselves," said he, "we have Abraham for our father, for I say to you that God is able of these stones of the river bank, lying countless around, to raise up *true* children to Abraham, but will shut *you* out from His kingdom, unless you repent."¹ Honoured by men at large as specially holy, they found themselves treated by John as very much the reverse.

But if he spoke thus sternly to some, no harshness marked his words towards those who were honestly anxious to reform. They were simply to show their sincerity by their unselfishness and uprightness. He that had two coats was to give one of them to him who had none, and meat was to be shared with the same open-heartedness.² Kindness to the naked and hungry was made a sign of true religiousness. Even the abhorred publicans, from whom the Pharisees shrank as accursed, were welcomed to citizenship in the new Kingdom of God, on true repentance. The proof that it was so, must lie in strict honesty in their calling. Juvenal, a poet who lived in the first century after Christ, tells us that the advantages of being a soldier, were, among other things, that no citizen when struck by one dared return the blow, though his teeth were dashed out, his face covered with blood, or even his eyes blinded. If, foolishly, the victim brought his assailant before the military judge, he could get no redress, while the whole legion became his enemies and wreaked their vengeance on him.³ But such rough soldiers were invited as freely

¹ Matt. iii. 7-9.² Luke iii. 10-14.³ Satire xvi. 9-32.

as any, if they pledged themselves to do violence to no one, to accuse none falsely, and to be content with their wages. That every man should do his special work faithfully, as in the sight of God, was his test of fitness for the new life he had promised. But he was far from telling them that mere outward reform was enough; it was of worth only as a sign of an inner change, deep and lasting. Awed by his words and appearance, his hearers trembled before him, and accepted baptism at his hand with loud confessions of guilt; for Orientals, when excited, are like children, weeping, sobbing, and crying aloud. The river banks were covered with penitents kneeling in prayer.¹ The publican, the profligate, the soldier, the peasant, and the citizen of every class, seemed resolved to carry out his exhortations and become all he wished.

Yet John with all his earnestness was still a Jew. Greater than the old prophets, inasmuch as he could speak of that Kingdom of God as at hand which they only foretold as future, he nevertheless did not live to profit by the teaching of Our Lord. He came "neither eating nor drinking,"²—that is, holding the idea of the hermits of his time, and of later ages, that supreme earnestness in religion demands the abstaining not only from all innocent pleasures, but even from any but the simplest food that will sustain life. The many ceremonial washings required by the Rabbis were sacred to him, as were also all their other requirements. He was a Jew of the old school, and knew nothing of the more liberal doctrines of Christ in these matters. His work was the red dawn of a better day, but it was still clouded by the night.

¹ Luke iii. 21.

² Matt. xi. 18.

CHAPTER X

THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST, AND JOHN'S CAPTIVITY AND DEATH

THE commotion excited by the preaching of John must have alarmed both the priests and the civil authorities, when they remembered how many popular risings had followed similar religious movements. The priests were the first to stir, the questions put to him by those sent from them being very probably intended to draw out some statement on which they might found an accusation. He, therefore, soon moved away from the neighbourhood of Jericho, to a place farther north, called Enon, or "the fountains," near Salim, a few miles east of the beautiful valley of Nablûs, then called Shechem—"the shoulder" of the land—where, though still in the Roman province of Judea, he was at a distance from his enemies at Jerusalem. A full brook rushes down the slopes near a village still called Salim, lying amidst low swellings of limestone hills, which sink gently towards the Jordan. It is a wild, barren region, but it may have been much more attractive in John's day, when the land was so much more thickly peopled.

As yet there was no sign of the promised Messiah. All Galilee streamed towards the great preacher, but he for whom all were looking did not appear.

Jesus, now about thirty, had been living quietly at Nazareth, for many years. Their homes being at opposite ends of the country, John and Our Lord had never seen each other, though cousins; but John was, no doubt, well acquainted, through his parents, with the wonderful circumstances attending the birth of the Son of Mary. The proper moment for revealing himself having, at last, however, arrived, Jesus made his appearance at Enon, to be set apart by John to his great office,

with fitting rites. Something about him at once arrested John's attention. He had come to be baptized; but John, for the first and last time with any one who had sought him, hesitated and drew back. "I have need to be baptized of thee," said he, "and comest thou to me?" He might not know by name or open intimation whom he had before him, but he felt that he addressed a greater than himself. Hitherto he had seen no one who came up to what he felt the expected Messiah should be; but as he looked at Jesus he instinctively felt that this must be he.

No wonder John shrank from baptizing Our Lord. His meekness, gentleness, and purity, showed him to be the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world—an allusion to the daily sacrifice of a lamb on the great altar in the Temple, and to the picture of the Messiah in Isaiah,¹ as one led as a lamb to the slaughter, bearing the iniquities of his people.

"Suffer it now," said Christ, "for it becomes us to fulfil all righteousness." Baptism in the case of Our Lord was the rite by which he was to be publicly set apart to his great work as our Saviour.

John resisted no longer, and leading Christ into the stream baptized him. Jesus had till now been known only as a humble villager of Nazareth, but he was from this time the publicly ordained Redcemer of the world. Being baptized, we are told, the heavens opened over him, and a vision of the Holy Ghost, descending as with the gentle earthward course of a dove, the symbol of purity and peace, was vouchsafed to Baptizer and Baptized; a heavenly voice meanwhile proclaiming—"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."² This was Our Lord's sacred anointing, foretold by Isaiah, "To preach good tidings unto the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day

¹ Isa. liii. 7, 8, 11.

² Matt. iii. 17.

of vengeance of our God.”¹ Priests were set apart by washing and anointing, and Christ submitted to the same rites. Instead of the Temple made with hands, he had around him the vast Temple of nature, and for the water of the brazen laver, he had the flowing stream under the great sky.

With the baptism of Our Lord, the work of John may be said to have closed. A higher than himself had come, and the lesser light was lost in the rising of the greater. How much longer he preached is not known, but he was still baptizing after Christ had begun his public teaching, and had performed his first miracle at Cana of Galilee. His career was suddenly and violently ended, by imprisonment at the hands of Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch² of Galilee. This crafty, fox-like,³ man was now between forty and fifty, and had reigned in Galilee since his father's death, four years after Christ's birth. During that time he had shocked the Jews by an odious second marriage, and the fearless Baptist had drawn on himself his bitter enmity, and still more that of his new wife, by denouncing the crime, the story of which is worth telling.

There had been a great gathering of all the Herod family in Jerusalem, but while enjoying the hospitality of one of his half-brothers, Herod Philip, called Boëthos, Antipas had been weakly induced by Herodias, the wife of his host, to promise to marry her; she engaging to leave Philip and come to Galilee, to be his bride. Strong-minded, ambitious and unprincipled, she tempted the weak man to commit this sin, that she might gain a sounding title, and no longer be the wife of a private person. Antipas set off to Rome immediately, and on his return, Herodias went to him to Galilee, after he, on

¹ Isa. lxi. 1.

² “Tetrarch” means ruler of the fourth part of a province. The other three rulers were, or had been: Archelaus, ruling over the Roman province of Judea; Herod Philip, ruling over the regions east of the Jordan, north of those belonging to his brother, Herod Antipas; Ly-sanias, Tetrarch of Abilene, a district between Damascus and Lebanon.

³ Luke xiii. 32.

his side, had divorced his wife—a daughter of Aretas, king of the district south of the Dead Sea. No crime could be more offensive to the Jews than this marriage, for Herodias was his brother's wife, and had borne him a child—Salome, so that she had not even a shadow of excuse; for though a Jew might marry the childless widow of a brother, every one was horrified at Antipas stealing the wife of a living brother, already a mother. John, who feared the face of no man, openly denounced¹ such a revolting breach of the Law by a Jewish ruler, and his words, no doubt, spread far and wide. The fury of Herodias may be imagined. She was then at least thirty-five, and was already scheming for still more power, and John's language imperilled her ambitious plans. Her new husband's half-brother Herod Philip, the Tetrarch of Iturea, across the Jordan, but close to the territories of Antipas, was unmarried; could he not be got as a husband, old as he was, to her young daughter Salome? The elderly bachelor was weak enough to be caught in her toils, and led home the girl to Cæsarea Philippi as his wife. Love had, of course, little to do with the match. The aim of Herodias was to get the tetrarchy of Philip for Antipas or herself, when Philip died. The marriage, however, did not take place till after the death of the Baptist.²

The rage of Herodias could not be appeased while John lived. But it was not easy to bring about the death of one so popular. A pretext found some time later enabled her to get at least a step nearer her end. Whispers were spread that John was becoming dangerous. With all the people crowding to his preaching, he might at any time rise, as Athronges the Shepherd, and Judas the Galilean had done, and create a great commotion in the land. Fear emboldened Antipas to take some measures to prevent the imaginary danger, and he was helped by the ill-will felt towards the great preacher by

¹ Luke iii. 19, 20.

² Salome was still a "damsel," that is, unmarried, when she danced before Herod, and asked the head of John.



THE DEAD SEA

the Jewish authorities. They hated him for the fearless truthfulness with which he exposed their shortcomings; and of course, Antipas himself at once hated and feared him, for daring to expose the crime of a king.

Afraid to take his life, it was yet possible to throw him into prison. Watching an opportunity, therefore, Antipas seized and carried him off to the dungeons of the great fortress of Machaerus, on the east side of the Dead Sea. This frowning stronghold, half castle, half palace, towered in great masses of squared stone, over a gorge of gloomy depth immediately below. There had been a fortress here in olden times, but the tetrarch had added greatly to it since his reign began. A huge wall, surmounted by strong towers, enclosed the top of the cliff, and within this space he built a grand palace, the walls of which were lined with many-coloured marbles, while it had magnificent baths, and every form of Roman luxury. Vast cisterns stored up water, barracks were raised for a large garrison, besides storehouses, and all else needed for defence in case of a siege. The underground dungeons, into one of which John was cast, are still to be seen, hewn deep down into the rock: living graves for prisoners shut up in them. The palace stood at the other end of the fortifications, and here, in the hot months, Antipas held high revelry with crowds of guests invited to the splendour of his gilded halls.

In this wild place the Baptist lay, cut off from all men, with his great work stopped when at its height, and his life virtually ended in its high spring-tide, for he was just thirty. Around him were only soldiers of all the barbarous races of the neighbouring lands—Arabs, Idumeans, Amorites, and Moabites, who ran no risk of his moving them to pity. He may have been more favoured than other prisoners, since he had been guilty of no crime, and may have been allowed to come up from his dungeon, at times, to the pure air. If so, he could look afar from his lonely height, over the very regions where he had spent the years of his desert life, and the months of his great triumph as a preacher to Israel.

There was, however, no hope of escape, had he been willing to make an effort to be free, for his prison was cut off by precipitous depths on three sides, while on the fourth, only a bridle path, leading through numerous fortified gates, permitted approach. Nor could he hope for mercy from Antipas, for the revengeful Herodias would not permit it. She had her victim in the toils, and meant to keep him there till she could slake her hatred in his blood. Sheiks of the desert tribes around went out and in; the troops of the garrison were reviewed and drilled, or lounged round the battlements, and haughty courtiers flashed hither and thither in their bravery, to and from the town in the valley beneath, but John lay in his dungeon, with no prospect of deliverance but through death. Yet the nation had not forgotten him, though he could know little of their pitying sympathy.

Antipas hardly knew what to do with his prisoner. The fear of a rising of the people, should he venture to put him to death, refrained him from doing so. Besides, he was, like many bad men, very superstitious, and feared John, knowing that "he was a just man and a holy," and therefore, "kept him safe"¹ from the rage of Herodias. Not only so; at times he even "heard him gladly," calling him apparently from his dungeon, or perhaps secretly going to him in it. But though troubled by his words, he did not amend his life in accordance with them, and his craven spirit might at any time yield him up, under some sudden impulse. It would even seem that he did not attempt to shield him from the cruel ill-treatment suffered by prisoners in those days, for Christ expressly tells us that "they did to him whatsoever they listed."²

Thus he lingered, we know not how long, in the stronghold of Antipas. His followers, however, were allowed more or less access to him, for some of them brought him news, among other matters, of Christ's

¹ Mark vi. 20, R.V.

² Matt. xvii. 12.

preaching in Galilee, and he was able to send out a message of inquiry respecting him. The imprisonment of their chief, and the new teachings of Christ, had sorely perplexed his disciples. Strict Jews, like John himself, they clung zealously to the washings and fasts on which the Pharisees laid so much stress, and were at a loss what to think of Jesus allowing his followers to neglect rites they held so essential. Could he be the Messiah, as John said he was, and yet act thus? The multitudes now flocked to the new prophet. Was it right to become his disciples or not?

Hearing such things, the Baptist, like his followers, was troubled. The Law, as expanded by the Rabbis, was in his eyes unspeakably sacred. Lonely, disappointed, half informed of the facts, he was almost inclined to doubt whether he had not erred in hailing Jesus as the Promised One. In this mood it appeared best to send to him and tell him his difficulties. "Now when John heard in the prison," says the Gospel,¹ "the works of the Christ"—the healing of the centurion's slave at Capernaum, and the raising from the dead of the widow's son at Nain—"having called unto him two of his disciples, he sent them to the Lord, saying, Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another? And when the men were come unto him, they said, John the Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another?" And Jesus "in that hour cured many of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many that were blind he bestowed sight." He then told them, "Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good tidings preached to them;" adding, as if to bring John back from his doubts, "And blessed is he, whosoever shall find no occasion of stumbling in me."

This answer showed that Our Lord was fulfilling the

¹ Luke vii. 18, R.V.

promise of Isaiah respecting the Messiah, and John would remember that in one place it was written, "Your God will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing;" and in another—which I have already quoted—"The Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted; to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."¹

Christ could have given no proof more convincing to John that he was indeed the Messiah.

This was the summer of John's captivity, but the winter was fast approaching. It was the custom to hold great banquets on the birthday of kings, and on the day of their accession to the throne. When, therefore, the time for the birthday festival of Antipas came round, invitations to it were issued to the officers at Machaerus, the sheiks of the neighbouring tribes, and any dignitaries within reach, including the chiefs, high military officers, and foremost men of the province.² The palace was brilliantly illuminated on such occasions, and hung with garlands of flowers; the tables spread with every luxury, and wine flowed freely; and the mirth and revelry grew more and more unrestrained as the hours passed. Herodias was not present, for it is not the custom, even now, in the East, for women to take part in the festivities of men. But to do honour to the day and to the company, her young daughter Salome was allowed to break through the rule of not mixing with the other sex, and condescended, though a princess and the daughter of kings, to dance before Antipas and his guests. A similar scene, on an inferior scale, is often part of the entertainment of honoured guests in Eastern countries, even now. At a local great man's house at Thebes, I saw several female dancers, who performed

¹ Isa. xxxv. 4, 5; lxi. 1, 2.

² Mark vi. 21, 22.

singly or in couples, before rows of men squatted on the divan, which ran along the walls of the large empty room, to the music of rude stringed instruments, played by performers seated on the ground, at one end of the hall. The dancers glided, now slowly, now faster, up one side and down another, throwing their bodies into attitudes immodest to any but Orientals. There was no speaking or singing. The dancing in vogue, both in Rome and the Provinces, in St. John's day, seems to have been of very much the same kind. The dancer did not speak, but acted some story by gestures, movements, and attitudes, to the sound of music. Masks, however, were then used in all cases, to conceal the features. The subject was always something from the fables of the gods, and hence intensely offensive to strict Jews, who were still further shocked by the dress of the dancer being duly planned to show her figure to the greatest advantage. There never was more than one female dancer at a time, nor did women display their skill in public, though, as in the instance of Salome, they sometimes appeared at private festivities.

Salome's dance was a great success. The revellers were charmed, and the weak head of Antipas, perhaps made weaker by wine, was fairly turned. He could not give away the humblest village without permission from Tiberius, but, forgetful of this, he vowed, with true Eastern extravagance, to do anything the dancer asked, if it were that he should give her half of his kingdom. Crafty beyond her years, she asked time to think what she would like, and withdrew to consult her mother. Herodias had now found her long-wished revenge, and instantly told her to go back and ask the head of John the Baptist. Antipas had hitherto saved him, but his mad words to Salome seemed, to his drunken brain, to leave him no escape from yielding up John at last into the hand of his deadly enemy. The priests at Jerusalem had said nothing when she and Antipas had outraged the Law and shocked public morality by their marriage, but John had denounced their sin, and must

die for exposing iniquity on the throne. Antipas, unfortunately, had not the manliness to refuse compliance. His honour, he fancied, bound him to the rash word given before his guests, as if any one had a right to ask him to commit a crime, or to twist his words to a sense they were never intended to bear. Had he, like Salome, taken time to reflect, he might have broken through the snare; but he had lost his presence of mind, and motioned to a soldier of the guard to carry out Salome's request. No warning was given to the prophet. The entrance of the messenger was the signal for execution, and the bloody head was presently brought on a salver and given, before the company, to Salome, who took it out as a welcome present to her mother. The mutilated body, however, cared for by loving disciples, was, perhaps the same night, laid in a tomb.

Such a scene marks the coarseness of the times, even in the highest ranks; for Antipas was not singular in mingling such a deed of horror with the mirth of a banquet. Caligula often had men put to torture before the guests at his feasts, and swordsmen, skilled in beheading, amused the table by cutting off the heads of prisoners brought in from their dungeons, to show the dexterity of the artists. At a public feast in Rome, he ordered the executioner to strike off the hands of a slave, accused, perhaps unjustly, of having taken a silver plate from one of the couches, and made the poor wretch go round the tables with his hands hanging on his breast, a board being carried before him, inscribed with his alleged offence.

After the death of the Baptist, Antipas went back to Tiberias, haunted, by the remembrance of his victim.¹ Salome was soon afterwards married, but her husband died in a short time, leaving her childless. She did not, however, remain a widow; finding a second husband in a great-grandson of Herod the Great, who was made King of Lesser Armenia by Nero. But Herodias and

¹ Matt. xiv. 1.

Antipas had no profit by Philip's death, though they had married Salome to him in the hope of being his successors; and in the end, his inheritance, for which they had schemed, was the cause of their utter ruin.

Some years after Christ's death,¹ Antipas was banished to Lugdunum, the modern Lyons, in France, and Herodias accompanied him; the ambitious dreams for which they had committed so many crimes, ending only in the shame and oblivion of dethronement and exile.

¹ A.D. 39.

CHAPTER XI

THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST

THE baptism of our Lord marked the opening of his public life. Hitherto he had been known only in his own village; but from this time he always spoke of himself as sent from God to set up His kingdom upon earth. "Ye know," says St. Peter, "the good tidings of peace by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), which were preached throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; concerning Jesus of Nazareth—that God anointed him with the Spirit and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him."¹

He now began to proclaim that the kingdom of God was not only, as John had taught, near at hand, but had already come, and took his place at its Head, bearing himself as "the only begotten of the Father," but also assuming the title of "the Son of Man," which had been assigned to the Messiah since the days of the prophet Daniel.

The earliest chapters of the Gospels show how our Saviour entered on his great work. Honouring John as a noble servant of God, he yet took his place from the first above him. John had required the strict observance of all the precepts of the Rabbis, though they were so numerous that St. Peter speaks of them as "a yoke which neither their fathers nor they themselves were able to bear."² Our Lord, on the other hand, said nothing of these painful and endless outward forms, but sought to win the soul to a higher spiritual life.

¹ Acts x. 37, 38, R.V.

² Acts xv. 10.



THE HILLS OF JUDEA FROM THE PLAIN OF JERICO

QUAESTIONA

To enter on so great a task, however, demanded a special season of meditation and self-dedication, for Christ was, in all things except sin, a man like ourselves. He resolved, therefore, to retire for a time from among men to prepare for the future. In the words of the Gospels, "He was driven by the Spirit into the wilderness." In its silent depths he could equip himself for his great task, weigh all the difficulties, and lay down his course in view of them. Moses had been prepared in the lonely mountains of Sinai for delivering Israel from Egyptian slavery, and for being their ruler and lawgiver. The Baptist had lived in the wilderness before he began his work on the Jordan; and St. Paul, after his conversion, retired for three years to "Arabia," before he entered on his office as an apostle.

To what part Christ withdrew himself is not told us, but St. Mark says he was "with the wild beasts," so that he must have gone outside the limits of even scattered human habitations. The yellow cliffs behind Jericho are still known by the name of Quarantania, or the place of the forty days' sojourn; and one summit, higher than the others, is called the Mount of Temptation. The whole region is pierced by innumerable caves, inhabited in later ages by multitudes of hermits. No grass or trees grow in the dreary, scorched ravines, or slopes of yellow and white limestone. Underfoot, the tracks, hither and thither, are only rough beds of winter torrents, heaped with boulders and stones of all sizes, and the sides of the hills are covered with similar wreck, precipitated from above by the storms and weatherings of ages. No place could be imagined more wild and desolate.

In this vast and lonely chamber of meditation and prayer Our Lord remained, we are told, for forty days, pondering the great work before him. In such circumstances every thought must have risen in turn; human weakness would plead for indulgence, and human fears counsel safety. Nor could he escape graver trials. The Prince of Darkness had, doubtless, often before sought to overcome him, but it was specially fitting, that he

should be put to the test now, at the entrance on his public mission.

The narrative of this time in the Gospels belongs to the closing of the forty days; the fiercest attacks of Satan being kept back till there was least power to resist them. Like all others, Jesus had been surrounded by evil from his earliest years, and might at any time have sinned had he chosen. But he had remained pure and unsoiled, like the white lily which is unstained by the muddy water around it. Milton is true to nature when he speaks of Satan as telling our Lord that he had heard the angels' song at Bethlehem, and—

“From that time seldom have I ceased to eye
Thy infancy, thy childhood, and thy youth,
Thy manhood last, though yet in private bred.”¹

It was nothing new, therefore, that he should be tempted in the wilderness.

The contrast between the teaching of Christ, and the ideas in which he had been trained, shows how easily any one but he might have been led astray by the tempter. Moses had been publicly set apart by God as the Law-giver of Israel, and the Temple, with its priesthood and services, had been marked by visible Divine approval. Were the rites and ceremonies thus established no longer binding? Every Jew, moreover, believed that the Messiah was to be a great king, who would crush the enemies of Israel, and rule in triumph over the world. Was this the course Christ was to follow, or would he only seek to rule over the hearts of men, changing them into the spiritual image of God? It must have been very hard for him, as a Jew, to break with all that his nation held most sacred. If, moreover, he was to be a faithful witness for God, he must rebuke the shortcomings of the religious leaders of his people, and he could not doubt that they would use all their influence to crush him. He knew, besides, that in any

¹ *Paradise Regained*, iv. 507-509.

attempt at moral reform, bigotry, self-righteousness, and self-interest would be against him. His nation thought themselves very religious, and he would have to tell them that they were the very reverse. They trusted in exact observance of outward rites, and to their descent from Abraham; but he would have to teach them, that neither exact observance of the Law, nor their being Jews by birth, would profit them before God, unless their hearts were right in his sight. He came to found a spiritual religion superseding the Jewish priesthood and Temple with their sacrifices and rites. How certainly must he count on being regarded as an enemy of God.

No thought of personal interest or ambition, however, for a moment disturbed him. Life was only of worth as it advanced the glory of his Father in the true welfare of mankind. But to face a people so fiercely self-righteous as his nation, so slow to move, so spiritually dead, was enough to try him to the utmost. All the prophets, from the first to the last, had been stoned, sawn asunder, outraged, martyred, and he knew that his fate must be the same as theirs.

Milton makes Our Lord, in these weeks, retire far into the depths of the wilderness—

“Musing and much revolving in his breast,
How best the mighty work he might begin
Of Saviour to mankind, and which way first
Publish his God-like office, now mature.”¹

The final issue we all know. Casting aside the national dream of founding a great Jewish ‘Kingdom of God,’ with its capital in Jerusalem, he sought only to found the reign of God in the heart of mankind. That he was to die for the good of man he knew from the first; but it was for that end, above all, he had come into the world.

We need not think of Satan as present in a human

¹ *Paradise Regained*, i. 185–188.

form, or as an angel of darkness, when he came to tempt Our Lord. He is never spoken of in the New Testament as visible, except when Jesus saw him fall, as lightning, from heaven. He is unseen when he assails ourselves, and we have no reason to suppose there was any difference in the case of Our Lord. The first temptation was very subtle.¹ Worn out with hunger, it was suggested to Christ that if, indeed, he were the Son of God, as he claimed to be, he surely erred in suffering thus, since, at a word, he could command the millions of stones around him to become bread. But Jesus did not for a moment allow himself to question his proper course. The miraculous gifts which he possessed had been given for the glory of God, not for his private use. As a man, he was dependent on the loving care of his Heavenly Father, and to provide for hunger by a miracle would be to show distrust of that Father's gracious providence. God had brought him where he was, and would protect him. His wisdom and goodness would provide for him. He had fed Israel with manna in the wilderness, and had sustained Moses and Elijah there, and would sustain *him*.

The second temptation was no less artful. From childhood Jesus had been taught that the Messiah was to be a Jewish king over all the world.² Jerusalem would be the greatest of cities, and the court of the Messiah more splendid than that of Rome had been. Since he had the power, would he not raise his nation to this pinnacle of glory? Would not his doing so, indeed, be the surest way to spread the worship of Jehovah, whose irresistible power it would show so clearly?

If he refused to carry out the national dream of a great worldly empire, there were before him only shame, poverty, neglect, derision, insult, and suffering, closed by a violent death. To make the temptation stronger, by heading his people, it was suggested, he would, as it

¹ Luke iv. 1-13.

² Isa. lx. 1, 5, 22.

were, look down, as from the top of some great mountain, on all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, and feel that they were his in their widest bounds. Fair rivers winding through rich pastures and fertile corn-fields; huge cities, high towered, the seats of mightiest monarchies; regions beyond the conquests of Alexander, in the East, or of those of Rome in the West, lay spread out before him, in these snaring thoughts, and would all be his, and as his, would be won for God!

But even this had no power over Christ. He would not rest his empire on force. To do so would hinder his great end. He came to found a kingdom on the love, not on the fears or outward submission of mankind. In the words of Milton, he virtually said—

“Victorious deeds
Flamed in my heart—heroic acts one while—
To rescue Israel from the Roman yoke;
Men to subdue,—and quell, o’er all the earth,
Brute violence and proud tyrannic power,
Till truth were freed, and equity restored;
Yet, hold it more humane, more heavenly, first
By winning words to conquer willing hearts,
And make persuasion do the work of fear.”¹

He set no value on worldly power and glory, and sought only the reign of true goodness. He knew that if he did not flatter the pride and ambition of his nation by preaching a universal Jewish Empire, he would turn them against him. But the temptation lost its power as he uttered the words, “Get thee behind me, Satan, for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”

He had now been tempted by hunger and by ambition: would he fall before an appeal to vanity? He might be willing to seek popular admiration by a display of his miraculous powers before the multitude, and no spot was so suitable as Jerusalem, for such an exhibition of them, as would at once convince men that he was indeed

¹ Paradise Regained, i. 215–223.

the Messiah. And, in the Holy City, no spot was so fitting as the Temple, the centre of the national religion and the chosen dwelling-place of God. The whole temptation, no doubt, passed only as a dream in the mind of Our Lord, just as we ourselves continually have waking visions in which we seem to do what, after all, we only think. In this way he seemed borne by Satan to one of the pinnacles of the great three-aisled Royal Porch, which ran along the south end of the Temple enclosure, and overlooked the valley of Hinnom from a dizzy height. Perhaps it was the time of one of the great feasts, when countless pilgrims were at Jerusalem; would it not, through them, carry his fame everywhere, if he cast himself from the glittering spire and fluttered down safely into the ravine, hundreds of feet below! The devil always has Scripture ready to serve his end, and in this case the promise of God was put into Christ's mind—"He shall give His angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up." But he despised vanity, and would not for a moment entertain the idea of employing his miraculous gifts for merely personal honour. One brief sentence turned off the attack: "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." He would not claim help from his Father for that which had not the sanction of His command.

That our Saviour should have been thus tried by the sorest temptations is the greatest comfort to us all. How real the struggle was at times, we know from his prayers and supplications, broken by strong crying and tears,¹ and by the touching outburst, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour."² He was proved and tried from his youth to his death, and, like us, might have given way. But we know that he did not.

The desert had now served its purpose, and his spiritual struggle passed away.

¹ Heb. v. 7; Luke xii. 50; Matt. xxvi. 39,

² John xii. 27,

CHAPTER XII

THE BEGINNING OF CHRIST'S PUBLIC WORK

WE know nothing of the personal appearance of the Saviour at any period of his life. Portraits or statues of men or women were forbidden among the Jews. They were *images*, and, as such, idolatrous. "Neither did the mischievous invention of men deceive us," says the "Wisdom of Solomon," "nor an image spotted with divers colours, the painter's fruitless labours: the sight whereof enticeth fools to lust after it, and so they desire the form of a dead image that hath no breath."¹ In Solomon's Temple there were figures of cherubim, copied no doubt from the palaces of Assyria, but they were carved or painted by heathen workmen from Tyre, accustomed to such forms of art. All that is said therefore of portraits of Christ, or of his personal appearance, is only misleading. No hint as to his features or form is given in the New Testament, and hence the early Christians had as little idea of them as we have. For this reason, when sorely persecuted in the first ages, they imagined that his visage and form were marred more than those of other men,² and that there was no beauty in him that men should desire him.³ But when days of prosperity came, the Church fancied he must have been supremely beautiful, from his Divine nature, and represented him as "fairer than the sons of men." "He was beautiful in his mother's bosom," says one of the later Fathers, "beautiful in the arms of his parents, beautiful on the Cross, and beautiful in the sepulchre." Yet even while thus describing him, it is added that these words are only a picture of the

¹ Wisdom xv. 4, 5.

² Isa. lii. 14.

³ Isa. liii. 2,

fancy, for "we are wholly ignorant of his appearance, and the likenesses of him vary according to the imagination of the artist."

About the year A.D. 1400, a Greek historian describes him, from the report of past ages, in striking words. "He was," says he, "very beautiful. His height was fully seven spans; his hair bright auburn, not too thick, and inclined to wave in soft curls. His eyebrows were black and arched, and his eyes seemed to shed from them a gentle golden light. They were very beautiful. His nose was prominent; his beard lovely, but not very long. He wore his hair, on the contrary very long, for no scissors had ever touched it, nor any human hand, except that of his mother, when she played with it in his childhood. He stooped a little, but his body was well formed. His complexion was that of the ripe brown wheat, and his face, like that of his mother, rather oval than round, with only a little red, but there shone through it dignity, intelligence of soul, gentleness, and a calmness of spirit which was never disturbed."

An imaginary picture of Our Lord by a famous German scholar, may be added. "Our eyes were restlessly attracted to him, for he was the centre of the group. He did not wear soft clothing of byssus¹ and silk, like the courtiers of Tiberias or Jerusalem, nor had he long trailing robes, like some of the Pharisees. On his head was a white keffiyeh—a square of linen doubled crosswise, so that a corner fell on each shoulder, and a third, down the back; a fillet, or soft rope, of camel's wool, twisted into a double ring, keeping it in its place on the head. On his body he wore an inner garment which reached to his wrists and to his feet, and over this a blue tallith,² with the legal tassels of blue and white at the four corners; its length such that the inner clothing, which was grey, striped with red, was little seen. His feet, shod with sandals, not shoes, were only visible now and then, as he walked or moved.

¹ Very fine linen.

² A broad scarf, with tassels at the corners.

"He was of middle size, beautiful as a youth in his face and form. The purity and charm of early manhood mingled in his countenance with the ripeness of mature years. His complexion was fairer than that of those around him, and showed less of the bronze colour of his nation. He seemed, indeed, even pale, under the white head covering, for the ruddy glow of health, usual at his years, was wanting. The type of his features was hardly Jewish, but rather as if that and the Greek types blended into a perfect beauty, which, while it awakened reverence, filled the heart, still more, with love. His eyes looked on you with light which seemed broken and softened, as if by passing through tears. He stooped a little, and seemed communing with his own thoughts, and when he moved there was no haughtiness as with some of the Rabbis, but a natural dignity and grace, like one who feels himself a king though dressed in lowly robes."

From the wilderness Jesus returned, apparently in the early spring, to the place where John was still baptizing. Here he lived apart, passing silently among the multitudes, day by day. Before his coming, John had told a deputation from the Temple authorities sent to discover if he claimed to be the Messiah—"I am only the voice of which Isaiah speaks as crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the 'Lord'"; an allusion to the fact that, in the East, the dry channels of winter torrents, or a track along a hillside, rough and stony, are often the only roads; requiring the larger stones to be removed and the others to be covered with earth, when a great man is on his travels, that he may have a smooth path. "I only baptize with water," added he, "but there stands among you One whom ye know not—who is to come after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose." He had often borne similar witness to Our Lord, but he was now able to do so in his presence. As he was standing, the next day, among his followers, Jesus himself approached. He was still unknown, but the hour had now come to

draw aside the veil. Pointing to him, therefore, while yet at a distance, he told his disciples to "Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" He, himself, he added, had not known him, but had come baptizing with water to prepare for his appearance. Nor would he have known him, though thus his herald, but for an intimation from above that he on whom the Holy Spirit should openly descend and rest was the expected Messiah, who would baptize, not with water, but with the Holy Ghost. This said he, I saw, in his case, and thus know him to be indeed "The Anointed of God."¹

Flocks of lambs, crossing the Jordan, for the Temple sacrifices, at the ford at which John was baptizing, may have led him to speak of Christ as "the Lamb of God"; a name since so sacred. Before Our Lord's baptism he had only been described as having his fan in his hand, and as laying the axe at the root of the trees, and baptizing with fire as well as with the Spirit. Now, however, John saw in him the meek, spotless, and patient Lamb, appointed by God as a sacrifice for the sin of the world.

These words of the Baptist found some hearts in which they at once bore fruit. The next day, as John was standing with two of his disciples, Jesus once more passed, and was pointed out again in the same terms. It was enough. Waiting with anxious hearts for the Messiah, the two no sooner heard this than they followed one thus honoured. Rabbis had usually a number of disciples living more or less in their company, to be trained in the Law, that they might afterwards themselves become teachers, and these two hoped that they might be allowed by Jesus to attach themselves to him, in this relation.

Those who now joined him were the first of those who in due time became his apostles. They did not belong to the Schools, and had followed only John, till then, but as plain men their minds were the more open to the truth, and less clouded by self-sufficiency.

¹ John i. 29-34.

Of the first two disciples, the one was Andrew, a fisherman from Bethsaida, on the Lake of Galilee; the other, doubtless, was the Apostle John, of the same town, though, with his usual modesty, he withholds his name. Very probably it was he who proposed to seek our Lord, and if so, he was the first to follow as he was the last to leave him.

Noticing the two following him, Jesus lovingly waited their approach. Seeking permission to be his disciples by the modest question where he had his home, they were forthwith invited to share it with him. The crowds attending John's preaching could not have found houses to shelter them, and must have put together simple shelters of boughs, with perhaps some cloth thrown over them, as a slight make-shift seclusion, sufficient for the climate of Palestine, where all that is needed for most of the year is a protection from the night mists. The encampment on the Jordan may have been like the frail shelter I have seen among the Indians of the American woods: or the tents of gipsies or Arabs one sees in the East. Indeed, one still sees great encampments spring up on the routes of the Easter pilgrimage, even now, as when in an hour I saw the green open space at Khan Minieh covered with tents and booths which were all gone by the next sunrise. The title Rabbi, by which they addressed Christ, was much the same then as our 'Reverend' now; but though specially given to Scribes formally ordained, it was freely used towards any teacher who won popular respect, and had been given to John, as it now was to Jesus.¹ Indeed, Our Lord was addressed thus by the Pharisees and Rabbis themselves.

The day passed quickly in Christ's company, and even when night approached the two were unwilling to leave. Charmed by their new Master, it was natural that they should tell their friends what had happened, and invite them to join him. Retiring, therefore, for a while, Andrew hastened to his brother Simon, and soon

¹ John i. 38.

returned, bringing him for the first time under the spell of Christ's words and presence. In him, as in John and Andrew, Jesus saw one worthy to follow him. He was to be the most rock-like of all the apostles—one who, except for a single moment, would never be untrue to his Lord amidst all the trials of the future. "Thou art Simon," said Christ, "the son of Jonas. Henceforth thou shalt be called Peter, that is, 'The Rock'"; and this he has been, ever since.¹ The Church was already founded when these three fishermen-disciples were gained.

According to the earliest traditions, James, the brother of John, was one of those who at this time came to Christ, brought by John, as Simon had been by Andrew. The four belonged to Bethsaida—or Fish town, on the Lake of Galilee, somewhere near Capernaum; a spot on the north edge of Gennesaret, Ain el Tabijeh, having been, perhaps, its site. The hills sink behind it into gentle knolls, leaving a delightful recess of comparatively level ground, through which a strong brook, still turning a mill, and hidden by thickets of oleanders and trees, pours swiftly towards the lake. A rough landing-place of stone reaches out a few yards, to assist the loading or unloading of any chance boat; its length apparently much less now than formerly, to judge from the heaps of stone in the clear shallows. There is a little bay just above, where the branches of shrubs and trees overhang the water, the coast jutting out into a cape to the north; but there is no population except the households of the mill-owner and of one or two fishermen. When I was at the spot one of my four boatmen waded into the shallows at the edge, after stripping himself to the waist, taking with him a small round casting-net, the border of which was hung with lead weights, to cause it to sink rapidly. Walking slowly and silently along the bank, watching for fish, and presently seeing some near, the net, in a moment, flew out in a circle over them. The next, they were in his hands, as he waded in and took

¹ John i. 40-42.

them from below the meshes. Was this a picture of the fisher life of Christ's disciples nineteen hundred years ago?

We know nothing of the father of Andrew and Simon, but James and John were the sons of one Zebedee and Salome, so honourably mentioned in the Gospels.¹ They had thus the priceless blessing of a godly mother, for Salome "ministered of her substance" to Our Lord while he lived, and was so true to him that she stood by the cross as he died.² That she should have been able to contribute to the wants of Our Lord, and that her husband is mentioned as having hired men in his service, shows that the family was comparatively well-to-do.³ Simon lived at Capernaum in a house large enough to give a home not only to his own household, his brother Andrew, and his wife's mother, but also to Christ himself, who appears to have usually lived with him.⁴ The courtyard of the house, indeed, seems to have been the scene of some of Christ's discourses; the flat-roofed building being apparently two storeys high.⁵

Having now four disciples, Our Lord turned once more towards Galilee, and was joined on the way by Philip⁶—like the others, from Bethsaida. They did not, however, go to that village, but to Cana, supposed by some to have been on the hill bordering the north side of the little plain of El Battauf, over the hill behind Nazareth, though the hamlet now named Cana lies on the south side of the plain. It consists of a few mud houses, flat-roofed, and generally of only one apartment, with a small mud-walled court at the side. They cannot be said to have any furniture, the room being largely filled, instead, with a clay oven built in the corner like a great ant-hill, and a clay bench along the walls. In an extra large cottage the floor was a little higher near the door: this being the living and sleeping chamber of the house-

¹ Mark xv. 40; xvi. 1; Matt. xxvii. 56.

² Luke viii. 3; Mark xv. 40, 41.

³ Mark i. 20.

⁴ Mark i. 29-35; ii. 2.

⁵ Mark ii. 2, Greek.

⁶ John i. 43.

hold; the lower part behind, the shelter of the ass, cow, or goat of the establishment. Fowls roosted on a rough perch overhead, and pigeons nestled in a clay dove-cote on the roof. What simple utensils daily life needed were outside in the yard, from which the sleeping mats were brought at night, when it was time to lie down. On the north side of the hamlet there are a few poor gardens inside loose stone walls, and there is a village well, round which the women and girls gather, morning and evening. The landscape is very pleasant, but not striking; its principal features being the ruins of Sepphoris; the hill over Nazareth, covered with the whitewashed tomb of a Mahomedan saint, and in front, the plain of Battauf, with gentle green hills on its northern side, reaching away towards the Lake of Galilee. A small Franciscan church, of white stone, recently built, bears an inscription over its door, "Here Jesus made the water into wine."

No sooner had Our Lord reached this village, than Philip, rejoicing at having found the Messiah, sought out a friend who lived in Cana—Nathanael, known also as Bartholomew, or the "Son of Tolmai." This good man knew nothing of Jesus, though Nazareth was so near. Indeed, he could not conceive that anything good could come from such a place, for it seems that the people of Nazareth bore a very indifferent reputation. Yet he was willing to come and see for himself. "An Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile!" said Christ to those round, as he approached; loving words heard by Nathanael, and already winning his heart. "How do you know me?" asked he, wondering. Philip had found him under a fig-tree near his house, hidden, as he thought, from all eyes. "Before Philip called thee," said Christ, "when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee." Nathanael felt that he was before one who could see even in secret. "Rabbi," said he, "thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." "Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree," replied Jesus, "believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than

these." From this time, the heavens would be seen, as it were, open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man—that is, there would from this time be a constant intercourse between him and heaven; countless blessings descending, as if brought by angels, and tidings of the progress of God's work in redeeming man, as constantly ascending.

CHAPTER XIII

CHRIST AT CANA : THE LAKE OF GALILEE AND THE PEOPLE OF THE DISTRICT

CANA, "the reedy place," so called, no doubt, from the original condition of the plain beside it, which is still swampy and fever-causing after the winter rains, was a busy village in the days of Our Lord, for the country was as populous then as it is desolate now. Opposite it, on the north, rose the village of Kefr Menda, still noted for its deep spring used in the hot summer, and its clay-banked pool of rain water for consumption in the other months. The plain rises and falls for two or three miles, in stretches of grass, barley, wheat or beans, without fences, several caravan tracks crossing it, to and from the northern fords of the Jordan; figs and olives fringing the southern edge and running up the slopes of the hills. Peasants and townsmen, then, as now, dotted the roads; trains of camels stalked along, laden with wool, oil, or wheat, for the market at Acre, or with goods for that of Damascus; asses pattered on with loads of grass, or vegetables, or with stone for building, balanced in small coarse frames at their sides, or bearing some turbaned citizen or humble villager; small flocks of sheep and goats wandered forth to the pastures on the hills round the plain, and the street of the village itself was astir with busy life.

A marriage was about to take place in the circle of Mary's friends, perhaps of her connections; and she and her Son were invited to the usual rejoicings. These began then, as they do still, by the bridegroom, in his best, going, attended by his groomsmen, "the sons of

the bride-chamber," to the house of the bride, on the wedding day, but the visit was paid to her father, not to her, to finish off the business payments by which she became a wife: a matter respecting which she was not allowed to have anything to say. This finished, preparations for the marriage began. A special girdle—the "attire" which a bride could not forget,¹ was always part of the maiden's dress, and a long veil covered her from head to foot. A wreath of myrtle or other shrub,—like our wreaths of orange blossom—was so necessary that the bride herself was often spoken of by its name. Her hair was left flowing, her dress was perfumed, and her brow glittered with as many coins as the family boasted, or, if poor, could borrow. The bridegroom had given her what presents he could afford when the marriage was finally settled; and, on her part, she sent as her gift a shroud, to be worn, as she wore hers, on the Great Day of Atonement, each year; and finally to be wrapped round him in his coffin, as her own would be round herself.

The bride was led to her husband's home with much pomp, and always after dark. She set out from her father's house in state, seated on an ass, and preceded by some of the droning flutes of the East, and such other music as could be had; a number of married women walking alongside her beast. No one could see her, for she was closely hidden by her veil. Numbers of girls followed, with loud rejoicings, and men with torches or lanterns lighted the way; for there are no lamps or shining windows in the streets of the East. Arriving at her future home, she was led to her own chamber, where she remained for the time under the care of a matron.

Meanwhile, the rejoicings began; the men sitting alone. The bridegroom, like the bride, wore a crown or wreath given him by "his mother in the day of his espousals, in the day of the gladness of his heart,"² and sat, "decked like a priest in his ornaments."³

¹ Gen. xxiv. 32; Jer. ii. 32; Rev. xix. 7, 8; 1 Cor. xi. 10.

² Cant. iii. 11.

³ Isa. lxi. 10.

The invited guests joined in a modest feast, eaten from one or more great bowls, often set on the clay floor; fingers serving for knives and forks, and pieces of bread for spoons; the meal consisting usually of a lamb or kid stewed in rice or barley. At last came the hour for the bridegroom's retirement. He had not yet seen his wife's face, but now, lifting her veil as she sat alone in her chamber, his satisfaction, which was almost a matter of course, was made known by a shrill cry of joy, for which the company outside eagerly listened; answering by similar gratulations. "Rejoicing greatly because of the bridegroom's voice,"¹ they then returned to their places to carry on their humble festivities: the women gathering elsewhere by themselves.

It was to some such marriage that Jesus and his five disciples had been invited.² The earthen floor and the ledge round the wall, which served as a couch by day, and a sleeping place by night, would be spread with carpets or mats, and the walls hung with branches. We may be sure that there was no excess, though innocent joy brightened all faces. The Baptist had been a Nazarite, tasting no wine, and eating no pleasant food, but giving himself to painful self-denial and hardship. Jesus, on the other hand, had come to make life, as a whole, religious; heightening its joys and tempering its sorrows, but not demanding the self-inflctions endured by St. John.

A marriage feast lasted usually for a whole week, but the cost of such prolonged rejoicing is very small in the East. The simple fare I have mentioned constitutes all the entertainment provided. The guests sit cross-legged, on the floor, round the great bowl, or bowls; the most honoured nearest; others behind; and all, in eating, dip their hand into the smoking mound; pieces of the thin bread, bent together, serving, as I have said, for spoons, when necessary. After the first circle have satisfied themselves, those lower in honour sit down to the rest. Water had been poured on the hands before

¹ John iii. 29.

² John ii. 1-11.

eating, and this is repeated when the meal closes; the fingers having first been wiped on pieces of bread, which, after serving the same purpose as table-napkins with us, are thrown on the ground, to be eaten by any dog that may have stolen in from the streets, through the ever-open door, or picked up by those outside when gathered and tossed out to them.¹ Rising from the ground, and retiring to the seat round the walls, the guests then sit down, cross-legged, and gossip, or listen to recitals, or puzzle over riddles; light being scantily supplied by a small lamp or two, or, if the night be chilly, by a smouldering fire of weeds kindled in the middle of the room, perhaps in a brazier; often in a hole in the floor. As to the smoke, it escapes as it best may; but, indeed, there is little of it—though enough to blacken the water- or wine- or milk-skins hung up on pegs on the wall: a result to which the Psalmist alludes when he says that he has “become like a bottle in the smoke”—his face being, as it were black, like it, from his troubles.²

Wine is little used now in the East, from the fact that Mahomedans are not allowed to taste it, and very few of other creeds touch it. When it is drunk, water is generally mixed with it, and this was the custom in the days of Christ also. The people, indeed, are everywhere very sober in hot climates; a drunken person, in fact, is never seen. This must be remembered when we read of wine being miraculously provided by Our Lord for the simple guests at the Cana marriage.

As it happened, the supply of wine in the Cana household ran short, so that shame before his neighbours threatened the bridegroom. Would Our Lord do anything to prevent this? Mary, outside, remembering the wonders attending his birth, thought he might; knowing that even so small a matter would excite his kindness and sympathy. She ventured, therefore, to hint to him the state of affairs, but, though her Son, tender

¹ Matt. xv. 27; Mark vii. 28.

² Ps. cxix. 83.

and loving in all things, he had now higher matters to concern him than even her pleasure. "Woman," said he, using the form of address universal in his day, "what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come." There was no disrespect in the word "woman," for he afterwards used it in his loving farewell to Mary when he hung on the Cross. "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it," said she, on hearing this answer—for it had no harshness to her. Six stone jars of large size stood in the court, for the constant legal cleansings required of Jewish households. "Fill the waterpots with water," said Jesus, adding, when they had filled them to the brim—"Draw out now, and take to the governor of the feast," that is, to the person acting as host. But the water had become wine. That, we are told, was the first of Our Lord's miracles.

The age of Our Lord at this time is not clearly known. The words of the Gospels—that he was about thirty years of age, leave room for different estimates. It has been even supposed, from the saying of the Jews, "Thou art not yet fifty years old,"¹ that he was between forty and fifty. But it is safest to keep to the words of St. Luke,² that "he was *about* thirty," though not younger, at his baptism.

The people of the Holy Land at the time of Our Lord were by no means all Jews. On the contrary, the villagers and peasants were, in great measure, descendants of the old Canaanite population, mixed with Philistine, Phœnician, and other blood, especially that of the settlers brought from Eastern regions by the Assyrian king, after the destruction of the kingdom of the Ten Tribes. This mingled race had, no doubt, largely intermarried with Jews, and had very generally adopted the Jewish religion, except in Samaria. The pure Jews, however, who were found chiefly in the towns, treated them with the utmost contempt. A peasant, to them, was "a beast;" one "born under the curse of

¹ John viii. 57.

² Luke iii. 23.

God ;" his hard daily life preventing him from carrying out the ten thousand rules of the strict Jews. The very name of "peasant" was, in fact, a loathing to these self-righteous bigots.

There was very little trade ; for Joppa, Cæsarea, and Ptolemais, or Acre, where harbours had been formed on the otherwise unsheltered coast, were not in Jewish hands. Besides there was little to sell, for the mostly bare hills, which made up Jewish territory, seamed by stony ravines and boasting few open valleys, were very rudely tilled. There were potters, dyers, and tanners in the towns, then, as now, and spinning and weaving were familiar, as they are still, to every housewife. Smiths made or sharpened the simple implements used in the field or the olive yard. Shops, such as they were, in the lanes of the towns, invited purchasers, and pedlars, often from other countries, passed from village to village with various wares.

The language of the common people was not Hebrew, but very much the same as it is to-day, a dialect of Syriac, spoken by Abraham before he came to Palestine, where he exchanged it for Hebrew, the language of his new home. The Old Testament was hence a sealed book to the mass of the people, and indeed had been so even in the time of Ezra, for we are told that when the Law was publicly read, educated men who understood it, "gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading."¹ The pure Jews, however, took care, in Christ's day, that their children should learn to read their sacred books, and hence Jesus, though Joseph and Mary were quite poor, could read it, when asked to do so, in the synagogue.²

To the Jews, as a whole, the Law of Moses was the object of an almost idolatrous reverence. Nor did they neglect the Prophets, which was the name given to all the other sacred books, for portions of them were continually read as the second Lesson in the synagogues,

¹ Neh. viii. 8.

² Luke iv. 16.

and copies of one or other of them were treasured in many Jewish households.

The religious condition of the peasants, in districts where there were no synagogues or schools, must have been very miserable. The old half-heathen worship on the hill-tops or "high places," remained in fact well nigh all they knew. Indeed, even at this day one sees on many a rounded summit, a small, domed, white-washed building, supposed to be the tomb of some saint, but known as the Mukam, the very name given to their "high places" by the Jews in old times. There the villager can leave his simple plough or anything else, in perfect safety, no one daring to steal from a spot so holy.

The country looked, in Christ's day, in all probability much as now. The whole land consists of rounded limestone hills, fretted into countless valleys, offering few level tracts. The original woods had for ages disappeared, though the slopes were dotted, as now, with figs, olives, and other fruit trees, where there was any soil. Permanent streams were even then unknown; the passing rush of winter torrents being all that was seen among the hills. The autumn and spring rains, caught in deep cisterns hewn out like huge underground jars, in the soft limestone, and artificial mud-banked ponds, still found near all villages, furnished water. Hills now bare, or at best rough with stunted growths, were then terraced so as to grow vines, olives, or grain. To-day almost desolate, the country then teemed with population. Wine-presses cut in the rocks, endless terraces, and the ruins of old vineyard-towers, are now found amidst solitudes overgrown for ages with thorns and thistles, or with wild shrubs and poor gnarled scrub.

The houses of Christ's time appear to have been mostly of sun-dried mud-brick, as most in Palestine are even now, for Joshua was able to reduce towns to a heap of ruins in a single day. Windowless, one-roomed, mud-walled huts, so dark that the woman who had

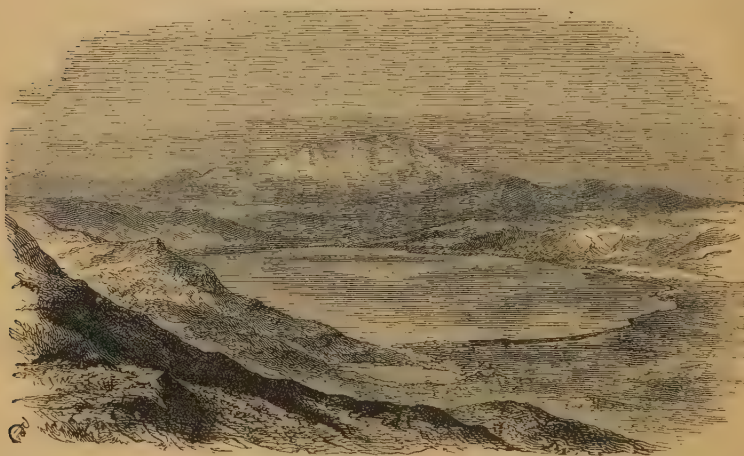
lost the piece of silver needed to light a candle by day, to search for her missing treasure, were apparently the rule, though in some parts, as now, rough stone huts were to be found.

The peasant was busy with his strip of stony soil, more or less round the year. After the autumn rains, which softened the ground baked by the glowing summer, ploughing began; but the implement even now used is so light that a boy could carry it on his shoulder. Indeed, I have seen a man carrying two. The soil having been scratched a few inches deep, was then sown. Large clods were broken by a mattock, but there were no harrows. Weeds and thistles grew in too many places, beside, or even amidst, the ploughed patches of different owners, which stretched, side by side, with only stones, as landmarks, to show their bounds. In spring, refreshing rains began to fill out the grain; showers, however, having now and then fallen, from autumn to spring; varied, occasionally, by violent rain storms.

By the time of the Passover, in the middle of April, the first ripe sheaf of barley could be gathered, and the wheat followed a month later; but the harvest in the mountains was much later than on the low hills and sea coast plains to the west, or in the sunken valley of the Jordan. Fruit was ripe from September onwards—including almonds, pomegranates, figs, and olives. Melons and cucumbers, lentils, vetches, millet, and much else, grew wherever there was water; but in no case must we think of the landscape as like that of England. Stones lie so thick wherever one turns in Palestine, that though the loose walls of orchards and vineyards are built of those cleared from the ground, it seems as if, after all, there were as many as ever left. Indeed, the paths between the vineyards are often half filled up with stones thrown into them from the two sides. What an Englishman would call a "clean field" is not to be seen in all the Holy Land, for weeds and thorns abound where stones are wanting, and almost everywhere but on the

sea-coast plains, or that of Esdraelon, loose stones cover the ground.

The stay of Our Lord at Cana seems to have been brief, for such a place was not a good centre from which to begin his great work. Nor could he make Nazareth his headquarters. It lay secluded among its hills, and, besides, was unfriendly, for a prophet has little honour



THE SEA OF GALILEE, LOOKING NORTH FROM KAUKAB EL HAWA.
(LIEUT.-COLONEL CONDER, R.E.)

in his own country. The place chosen for his future home was Capernaum, on the shores of the Lake of Galilee, which lies to the north-west, over the hills, thirteen or fourteen miles from Cana.

This fine sheet of water is about the size of our Lake Windermere, stretching, pear-shaped, about twelve and a half miles north and south, with its greatest breadth at the upper end, where it is about eight miles across.



TEL HÔM, CAPERNAUM

Its main feeder is the river Jordan, which flows into and out of it; but a few strong springs and brooks enter it here and there. The surface of the Mediterranean, thirty miles off in a straight line, is 682 feet above its waters, so that its shores, thus nearly 700 feet below the coast line, are very warm; a girdle of heights and rounded hills on the western side, and high bluffs on the eastern, making it additionally sultry by shutting out the free sweep of the winds. At the present day the shores are almost uninhabited; Tiberias, a miserable village, being the only place of any size. On the west side, the hills, which are only a few hundred feet high, are little tilled. On the east, the cliffs stretch along in a table-land, worn into deep ravines by the rains of ages. On both sides, the hills, except for short distances, come close to the water, the largest level space on the west being a waste but fertile stretch, two and a half miles long and a mile broad, watered by several fine springs, and once famous as the plain of Gennesaret. A few palms dot the banks, and there is a palm grove at the south-east corner, the last relics of countless trees of the kind which flourished in the time of Christ. Everywhere the landscape is so wild and uncultivated that the few spots brought under the light plough, on the slopes and in the little valleys, are not noticed till one comes to them. Even Gennesaret is covered with thorns and thistles, though in Christ's day it was the garden of the Holy Land. Various large towns then dotted the west shore: Tiberias, the capital, built in Our Lord's childhood by Herod Antipas, having walls three miles in their sweep, and a great palace and citadel. The hills as well as the plain were then everywhere richly cultivated, and there was a large fishing trade at different points, giving employment to thousands, though now there is only one boat on the waters.

Where Capernaum lay is disputed. Tel Hûm, a few miles from the head of the lake on the north-west bend, has been thought by many to be the site. The hills recede some distance from the shore, leaving a level

space still covered with ruins, of which the most striking are the remains of a synagogue with carved lintels and door-posts: sometimes fancied part of that which was built by the centurion mentioned in the Gospels. An outflow of black lava from neighbouring volcanoes long ago extinct, forms the surface rock at this point, and of this the ruins chiefly consist; the stones of the synagogue forming a striking exception. It could never have been a large place if this were its site, and indeed it is described, almost in Christ's day, as a village.

Some, however, think that Capernaum lay three or four miles farther south, just below the spot thought to be the site of Bethsaida, at a place now called Tel Minich, where there is a delightful open meadow, with a low outcrop of rock on its north side; a brook dammed up by the sand on the lake edge making a small pool below, fringed with Syrian papyrus. The surface is dotted with mounds from which the peasants still dig out great squared stones for building, or to burn as lime. Capernaum may, therefore, lie underneath the green mantle around, especially as the Roman road to Damascus came down to the lake at this point. If this be the place, Our Lord must often have wandered along the road northward, across the meadow streamlet, and he must have taken the narrow path hewn in the crag over the water, when he went towards the head of the lake, for it is still the only one in that direction.

Capernaum was then a thriving village, for the road from the north brought travellers, and the lake yielded great quantities of fish. It had a custom-house, barracks for a small garrison, and a fine synagogue. The townsfolk seem, as a rule, to have been well-to-do, and, indeed, they had the reputation of being given to good living and too copious drinking. That they were immensely proud of their town, and expected a great future for it, is implied in the words of Our Lord himself. "And thou, Capernaum, shalt thou be exalted unto heaven? thou shalt go down unto Hades,"¹ and

¹ Matt. xi. 23, R.V.

assuredly it has done so, for, as we see, even its site is a question.

Here Christ settled, amidst fisher-people, grain and fruit-sellers, and the various classes who gather together in a bustling place of trade. Gennesaret, with its fine constant streamlets and rich soil, lay close at hand on the south; the grey bluffs of the east rose beyond the waters, and from many points the great snowy top of Hermon flashed in the upper sky to the north, beyond a sea of hills rising ever higher and higher. With no spot is the story of Our Lord more closely connected. Capernaum was the home of the Apostles Peter, John, James, and Andrew. Here the centurion's slave was healed, the daughter of Jairus raised, the mother-in-law of Peter cured of a fever, and Matthew called from the booth where he sat to take dues; from a boat pushed out from the shore, Christ preached to the crowds, and it was in the waters near, that he granted the apostles the great draught of fishes.¹

The whole neighbourhood, indeed, is sacred to the memory of Our Lord. The vineyards round which the owner planted a hedge, and in which he built a watch tower and dug a wine-press,² stretched along the slopes behind. On these dry but fertile hills the old wine had grown and the new was growing, for which new skin bottles³ were needed. Lilies more glorious than the robes of Solomon⁴ grew in thousands on every hand in the open ground, and the eye rested, far and near, on the grass which was so soon to be made fuel for the oven.⁵ He could not walk into the hills without coming on the thin pastures where the shepherd left the ninety and nine sheep to go after one that was lost.⁶ The ravens that have neither storehouse nor barn,⁷ daily sailed overhead to the steep cliffs behind Magdala, from which, also, flew forth the hawks, at the fall of whose shadow the hens gathered their chickens under their

¹ Luke vii. 1; viii. 41; iv. 38; v. 27; v. 3, 11.

² Matt. xxi. 33.

³ Matt. ix. 17.

⁴ Matt. vi. 28.

⁵ Matt. vi. 30.

⁶ Luke xv. 4.

⁷ Matt. v. 26.

wings,¹ and the vultures, which swept down wherever a dead animal was seen.² Fig-trees abounded, on any one of which the dresser may have found no fruit for three years,³ and the mustard grew here and there into so great a tree that the fowls of the air lodged in its branches.⁴ The signs of the weather were read by the townsfolk from the look of the sky round the lake. A murky red to the east, in the morning, was held to predict a storm; and when the sun sank red and glowing in the west, fair weather was expected the



SKIN WATER-BOTTLES.

The same kind of bottle as used for wine, oil, milk, and other things.

next day.⁵ A cloud from the sea warned every one that a shower was coming, and when the clouds sailed north, it was held that the day would be hot. Christ would see in the bazaar of the town, or on the street, the travelling merchant who exchanged a grand Babylonian carpet for one great pearl⁶ brought, perhaps, from Ceylon. Fishermen, publicans, and peasants passed continually. In Tiberias were the courtiers in silk robes, who lived in the palace of Antipas;⁷ and he

¹ Matt. xxvii. 33.

² Luke xiii. 6.

³ Matt. xiii. 45, 46,

⁴ Matt. xiii. 31, 32.

⁵ Matt. xxiv. 28.

⁶ Matt. xvi. 2, 3.

⁷ Matt. xi. 8

would daily hear the trumpets of the little garrison announce the different watches, and the horns blown on the roof of the synagogue to summon to morning and evening prayer.

In this town Christ lived at first, for a short time, with his mother and the few disciples he had gathered; but he soon went off to the Passover at Jerusalem, and appears, on his return, to have stayed with Peter, whose house was on the shore of the lake, with a courtyard before it.¹

¹ Mark i. 29; ii. 2, 4, 13; iv. 1; Matt. xvii. 24.

CHAPTER XIV

CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE AND MEETING WITH NICODEMUS

JOHN had chosen for his home "the terrible wilderness," with its "vipers, and scorpions, and drought"; Jesus made his abode in the district spoken of by his nation as "Paradiase." The one had around him only silence and desolation; the other the hum of a busy community. Nothing could better show the difference between the work of the two. Christ was to wear no rough prophet's mantle like John, but the simple dress of other men of a lowly station. He was to lay no stress on fasts and washings, as John did, for he came to all men, irrespective of their race; and while indifferent to the Jewish laws about meats or drink, taught that the one thing required for pleasing God was to be righteous in heart and life.

Our Lord had resolved to go up to Jerusalem to the Passover, but meanwhile preached diligently throughout the country, though his words, very strangely, seem not to have been much heeded.¹

In the month of April, on the eve of the 15th of which the Passover was eaten, the bare hills and open plains were covered with wild spring flowers and fresh grass. The roads were crowded for weeks before with pilgrims, droves of sheep and oxen, and traders; for the Holy City was the centre of business as well as religion, at the great feasts. The city itself and the neighbourhood became more and more filled as the feast approached; the narrow streets and dark arched bazaars

¹ Matt. xi. 20, 24; Luke x. 13, 15.

showing the same throng of men of all nations as when Jesus had first visited Jerusalem as a boy. Even the Temple offered a strange sight at this season, for in parts of the outer courts a wide space was covered with pens for sheep, goats, and cattle, to be used for offerings. Sellers shouted the merits of their beasts, sheep bleated, oxen lowed. Sellers of doves, also, had a place set apart for them. Potters offered a choice from huge stacks of clay dishes and ovens, for roasting and eating the Passover lamb. Booths for wine, oil, salt, and all else needed for sacrifices, invited customers. Persons going to or from the city shortened their journey by crossing the Temple grounds, after carrying burdens. Stalls to change foreign money into the shekel of the Temple, which alone could be paid to the priests, were numerous; the whole confusion making the sanctuary like a noisy market. Indeed the Passover was the great fair of the year; the priests allowing these scandals for the sake of the licences and rents. The high-priest himself, moreover, supplied doves to the traders.

Jesus was greatly troubled by all this. Young, unknown, and a Galilean, he had no authority to interfere, but such scenes in a place so holy roused his soul. Hastily tying together some small cords, he commanded the sellers of sheep and oxen to leave the Temple, and followed them up till they and their beasts were driven out of the gates. The sellers of doves were allowed to take their cages away, but they, too, had to leave. The money-changers—a race of cheats—fared worst, for their tables were overturned and they themselves expelled. The Temple, for the first time in many years, was really sacred to God.



JEWISH SHEKEL.

The priests were, for the moment, paralysed by such lofty zeal. Fearing that Jesus had the people behind him, for some time there was a great reform, but three years later, matters had become as bad as ever. Nothing could be done against one whose fidelity to the Law had won the admiration of the crowd, but the authorities ventured to ask that, as he claimed to act by authority from God, he should show some proof of it.¹ Nor did he refuse to answer, though his reply shows that he already knew the fate awaiting him. "Destroy this temple," said he, pointing apparently to his body, "and in three days I will raise it up." In fact he did not answer them at all, except by a hint that their even taking his life would be idle, clothed as he was with divine power. But they either wilfully or honestly mistook his meaning, for from this time he was charged with threatening to destroy the Temple; an accusation sure to rouse the bitterest fury of the nation, as was shown when the high-priests at his trial, by repeating this slander, in a moment stirred up the multitude to demand that he should be crucified. Nor did they forget it when he hung on the Cross, and it was revived when the first martyr, St. Stephen, was before his enemies.

After the cleansing of the Temple, a number of miracles wrought by Christ in Jerusalem led many to accept him as a Teacher come from God,² but none of these converts attached themselves closely to him. Nor did he trust himself to them, "for he knew what was in man." Very few indeed out of Galilee seem at any time to have connected themselves publicly with him; the only apostles from Judea being, apparently, Judas Iscariot, "the man of Kerioth," a village of Southern Judah,³ and possibly Simon, the Zealot.

One of the disciples, now gained, who bore the Greek name of Nicodemus,⁴ was a member of the Sanhedrim or high Jewish Court, and a strict Pharisee. He was wealthy, moreover, and thus, at once from his position

¹ John ii. 18.

² Joshua xv. 25.

³ John ii. 23.

⁴ John iii. 1; xii. 42.

and means, might have been of great use in a new movement, had Jesus been time-serving or self-seeking. But Our Lord's perfect sincerity and truthfulness would in no way lower the conditions demanded for admission among his disciples, even to gain such a convert.

Cautious, from his age and position, this dignitary would not come openly to the new Teacher, but stole to him under cover of night, anxious to hear more from one whose discourses had already greatly impressed him. Believing that, as a Jew, a Pharisee, and a leader in the Church, he would of course be welcomed, he wished simply to learn more about Christ's teaching; his special anxiety being to get any fresh instructions as to the conditions of admission to the Kingdom of God, which every one was expecting to be set up presently by the Messiah. But Christ saw at once that he thought only of outward compliances and duties, not of spiritual preparation; and so far from making any attempt to win him, at once placed grave impediments in his way. He must be "born again," if he would even "see the Kingdom of God."¹ "Born again," said Nicodemus, "how can that be?" Nicodemus was the great Rabbi of the Sanhedrim, and, as such, Jesus asked him: "Art thou the teacher of Israel, and understandest not these things?" Mere observance of rites and duties is not enough: your heart must be changed to serve God from love, and you must show that it is so by your being baptized, before you can enter into the true Kingdom of God. If you do not see and feel this, it is impossible for you to understand further truths. Only those created, as it were, anew in their views of religion, by God's Spirit, can be citizens in God's kingdom.

It must have been hard, indeed, for Nicodemus to accept such teaching. Yet this young man, a Galilean, and not taught in the school of any Rabbi, bore himself as altogether his superior. Indeed, setting aside even Moses, he took his place as of higher dignity. Poor and

¹ John iii. 3, 10 R.V.

friendless, he claimed to be the Son of man or "Messiah," speaking with a divine authority which no Rabbi would dream of asserting, and in language wholly different from anything he had ever before heard.

The stay of Christ in Jerusalem was short, for he left when the crowds of Passover pilgrims were gone; setting out with his disciples on his first missionary journey. The district thus favoured embraced all Judea;¹ as if the country nearest the Temple should first hear of the new Kingdom of Heaven. He would thus be led southwards, to Hebron and the hill-towns beyond, in a region which now shows only grey, dry hills, sinking to the Dead Sea on the east, mostly abandoned to scattered flocks of sheep or goats, which roam over districts which appear too sun-scorched to give pasture for anything. Round Hebron, indeed, there is a pleasant valley, still famous for its vineyards and olive groves, but as a whole the landscapes are indescribably barren, both north and south of it.

Yet the ruins of many places of varied size, with cisterns cut in the rocks, and remains of stone walls, formerly damming back and saving the winter torrents, in the ravines; long lines of stone heaps, along the slopes, once used to train vines, and ruins of many aqueducts, show that in Christ's day this region was well peopled. Indeed, even at the desolate wells of Beersheba, beyond the hills and on the edge of the desert, there was then a busy population and a Roman military post. What with Bethlehem and Hebron, and the numerous small hill-towns and villages, there would be thus abundant opportunity for preaching the new Gospel. How long the tour lasted is not known, but it must have occupied some months, for he stayed from time to time at different points; he teaching, and his disciples baptizing the converts gained.

Christ's preaching at this time was no doubt the same as in his early ministry in Galilee,—“Repent, for the

¹ Acts x. 37.

Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." The time had not yet come for openly proclaiming himself the Messiah, though he acted as such from the first. Caution was needed to prevent alarming the authorities.

Meanwhile, John was still preaching to large multitudes at Enon, where it soon was reported that Jesus was acting independently of their master, since he did not, like John, baptize; as if they were opposed to each other. Moreover, Our Lord was attracting greater numbers than the Baptist.¹ But John quietly discountenanced any discussion on such a point, and in his grand humility dismissed some who had brought the fact of Christ's popularity before him, by repeating that he was only a herald before Our Lord, so that it was natural his own popularity should fall away, now that he whom he preceded had appeared.

¹ John iii. 26.

CHAPTER XV

THE SAMARITAN WOMAN AT JACOB'S WELL

JESUS had now remained in Judea about nine months, from the Passover in April to the sowing-time at the close of the year;¹ but though his popularity grew daily greater, and his fame spread even to Galilee, the good done was so small, that, to the Baptist, it seemed as if he had gained no disciples at all.² The bigoted southern people were too self-righteous to accept a teacher who laid no stress on forms and rites, but taught that all men alike needed repentance and a new life. It was time, therefore, to return to the north.³

To avoid going through Samaritan territory, most travellers from Judea to Galilee went down to Jericho, and thence up the eastern side of the Jordan, to the fords at Beisan, from which the ascent to the plain of Esdraelon was short and easy. Our Lord, however, chose to take the direct road, north from Jerusalem.

Leaving the Holy City by the Damascus Gate, through which, years later, he was to pass on his way to the Cross, Our Lord's journey lay, first, through the great cemetery where he afterwards found a tomb. There is no soil in which to dig graves, but the rock crops out in low ridges on all sides, and is honeycombed with ancient burial-places. At a short distance, on both sides, hills rise, grey and barren, with rounded tops, seamed in every direction by shallow clefts, giving foothold to thin lines of brown thorny shrubs and rank weeds and grass, from which goats and sheep manage

¹ John iv. 35.

² John iii. 32 ; iv. 44.

³ John iv. 1-42.

to pick a scanty living. The long ascent of Neby Samwil—the birthplace of Samuel—and the highest summit in Judea, comes in sight very soon, and remains the chief object in the landscape till the wayfarer is far to the north. In Christ's day terraces along the sides of the hills redeemed the view from desolation; but when the ancient territory of Benjamin has been crossed, and the hills of Ephraim are reached, the slopes are beautiful with olive groves and fig-trees, amidst green pastures. Jesus would not, perhaps, go through Bethel, for it lies to the right of the road, but he would see the hill of Gibeon, with its limestone beds jutting out, step over step, like great walls; the flat top of each green with fruit trees or grain, and the poor mud village above. He would cross the stony waste over which the Canaanite chiefs leagued against Joshua fled, down the pass of Bethhoron, to the sea plain. At the steps of Akrabbim, or the "Scorpions," after toiling up long, rough, natural steps of rock, infested by countless scorpions in the hot months, the territory of Samaria was before him, while high in the distance the snowy top of Mount Hermon glittered like a great white cloud, the most splendid feature in the landscapes of Palestine, and always in view from Akrabbim, north.

Samaria is a much richer country than Judea. The green rounded hills are dotted with olive and walnut-trees, while in the hollows, fruit trees of many kinds alternate with patches of corn or grass; for springs are much more plentiful than in the south, and spread fertility far and near. Yet the homes of the peasants were very wretched then as now. Poor mud villages were around Christ as they still are round the traveller, though the roads, now so desolate, were then full of people. He would soon find himself in a large and fertile plain running north and south, which opens on its west side into a little valley in which lay Shechem, under the shadow of Mount Gerizim, and opposite the barer height of Mount Ebal. Jews were not very safe in these parts,

in Christ's day; they and the Samaritans being bitter enemies; but the Roman garrison at Samaria, with its different outposts, in a measure preserved the public peace. The outside plain, bordered on each side by hills, rises and falls in soft waves, some crowned by villages; and patches of grain, lentils, or other growths, stretch on every hand for miles together. It is, indeed, one of the richest parts of the Holy Land, and the wide sea of grain, as our Lord looked over it from his seat at Jacob's well, naturally raised thoughts of the great spiritual harvest that called for his labour and that of his followers.¹

Shechem lies about a mile and a half up the side valley, under the shadow of Mount Gerizim, which towers over 1100 feet above it, while Mount Ebal, on the north side of the narrow green space between, rises about a hundred feet higher. A fine brook runs eastwards, down the valley, towards the Jordan, but other brooks run to the west, that is, to the Mediterranean; a slight rise of ground making this spot the watershed of the district, as, indeed, its old name, Shechem — "a shoulder" — implies. Abundant water, in Christ's day, embowered the town in gardens and orchards, as it does still. Behind the climbing flat-roofed houses, the steep slope of Gerizim is crowded far up with fruit trees, and, still above them, terraces, built on every available spot, wave with grain. Where too steep for culture, the rocks are covered with bushes and scrub, so that waving green looks out from every angle. On the other side of the little valley, the grey walls of Ebal are terraced with gardens of the cactus known as the prickly pear, grown for its fruit, which is eaten by the poor. There is little culture at this time in the valley itself, but it may have been very different in the days of Our Lord.

Close under Gerizim, at the mouth of the valley, there was then, as there is still, a well famous as that dug by the patriarch Jacob, to avoid disputes with his neigh-

¹ John iv. 35.

bours; for nothing raises more strife in the East than the right to use wells or brooks. A wall round the mouth served in Christ's time as a seat for the weary traveller; but at present a low mound of the ruins of an ancient church are all one sees: the well showing itself through four or five feet of rubbish. It is still seventy-



JACOB'S WELL, AS IT USED TO BE.

five feet deep, but rarely has water in it, and a large stone is over the mouth, with an opening for water jars in the centre. Fifty years ago the depth was more than a hundred feet, but stones thrown down to listen for their rebound are rapidly filling it up.

Tired with his long hot walk, for it was now mid-day, Jesus turned down the short slope leading to the well,

and seated himself on the step round it, while his disciples went a mile and a half up the valley to the town, to buy bread and fruit for the morning's meal. While he thus rested a Samaritan woman from Sychar, a village at the foot of Ebal, just outside the valley, now very poor and wretched, came up with a water-jar on her head and a long cord in her hand, to let the jar down the well. No one in the East thinks of refusing a draught of water, and Jesus, when she had drawn some, craved this favour. Seeing he was a Jew, the woman was amazed that he spoke to her, a Samaritan, no Jew deigning to notice one of her nation, and especially wondered that he should ask to drink from her jar, which no Jew would touch, holding it legally 'unclean.'

Nothing, indeed, could exceed the bitterness between the two peoples. The Jews denounced the Samaritans as polluted descendants of the heathen settled on the Holy Land by the Kings of Assyria, after the Ten Tribes had been carried into captivity, and had refused with insult their proposal, made soon after the return from Babylon, to unite with them as one people. A temple had ultimately been built on the top of Gerizim, to rival that of Jerusalem, but it had been razed to the ground by a Jewish king more than a hundred years before Christ's birth; the city of Samaria, also, having then been utterly destroyed. So intensely, indeed, was the very name Samaritan hated at Jerusalem, that, on one occasion, Christ's enemies there could think of no more hateful taunt than that he must be a Samaritan, adding that, as such, he necessarily was possessed by a devil.¹

Nor was the hatred less bitter on the other side. The Samaritans, time after time, had deranged the Jewish calendar and the dates of the feasts, by lighting the hills, as if for the new moon, before its appearance, and in the early youth of Our Lord they had even defiled the Temple itself, by strewing human bones in it, at the

¹ John viii. 48.

Passover, so that the feast could not be held, though myriads of pilgrims had come up to attend it.

Towards all but the Jews, however, the Samaritans were very friendly, so that both Herod and the Romans found their country much more pleasant than Judea. Both races were equally zealous adherents of the Law of Moses, but the Samaritans recognised only the first five Books of Scripture, and held that Gerizim, not Mount Moriah, had been selected by God for the Temple. They believed also that the Ark had rested on it after the Flood, that Abraham offered Isaac upon it, and that Jacob had seen from its top the ladder that reached to heaven. They expected that the Messiah, when he came, would first appear on its sacred height, to which every Samaritan turned his face in prayer, as to the special seat of Jehovah, as the Jew turned for the same reason to the Temple at Jerusalem.

The answer of Our Lord to the woman at once roused her interest. She was coming to draw water from a well supplied only from the filtration of the rains, compared to which "living water," that is, the water of a flowing stream, was much superior. Christ, therefore, aptly told her that if she had asked him for it, he would have given her "living water" instead of that of a well. He meant, of course, spiritual instruction; but, like Nicodemus, she took his words literally. "Why," said she, "you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Whence then can you give me this living water?" He surely did not think himself greater than Jacob, whom the Samaritans proudly called their father. The well was good enough for him, and yet Christ spoke as if he knew of better water. But now the great Teacher led her from lower to higher things, speaking of water which gave everlasting life, and satisfied the soul for ever. "Could she really have some of this miraculous water?" she asked, but was told to "call her husband," and, on her saying she had none, found he knew her story: that she had had five husbands, and

that she was now living with a man to whom she was not married. She could only stammer out—"Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet." Then, collecting herself, and wishing perhaps to turn the conversation, she added, looking towards the sacred mountain,— "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, but you Jews say that Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." "Believe me," replied Christ, "the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship him but do not know him, having cut yourselves off from his people and rejecting the words of the Prophets. The Jews, instructed by the Scriptures, know all that God has made known respecting himself, and are thus sure that the Messiah must come from them. But a great change is near. The hour approaches, and indeed has already come, when all true worshippers shall worship the Father only in spirit and in truth, not by rites; for such alone the Father seeks. The claims of your mountain, or of that on which the Jewish Temple is built, are of no moment, and all the rites and ceremonies on which you and they lay so much stress are small matters; the only worship pleasing to God is that of the sincere heart, and can be offered anywhere over the earth." Such words were new in the history of the world, for they founded a universal religion, and treated all mankind as the family of a common Heavenly Father.

Feeling quite at a loss to understand them, the simple-minded woman could only say that she thought it would be well to put off such deep matters till the Messiah came, and then he would "tell us all things." "You need not wait," answered Our Lord, "I that speak unto thee am he." Thus the first open declaration of himself as the Messiah was made to a lowly Samaritan woman, as the first announcement of his birth had been made to simple shepherds.

Meanwhile, the disciples, returning from Shechem, to their astonishment found Jesus talking to a woman,



PEASANT WOMAN AND CHILDREN

Such as the Pharisees reckoned "Accursed"

although it was held unbecoming for any man, far less a Rabbi like him, to speak in public to one of the other sex. Nothing was said, however, though the lesson must have sunk into their hearts, for Christ thus taught the world a higher respect for woman, and raised her from the inferior position she had till now held, to be the companion and social equal of man.

On the arrival of his followers, the Samaritan, unwilling, we may suppose, to stand the gaze of a number of men, and perhaps ashamed to have been talking unveiled with a man, hurried off to Sychar with her jar and rope. The modest food got at Shechem was then produced, but the disciples could not induce Jesus to taste it. His heart was too full of higher matters to let him think of hunger. "I have meat to eat," said he, "that ye know not of. My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." Mistaking his meaning, they fancied that some one had given him food, but, looking over the wide plain outside, where the peasants were scattering the seed to be reaped four months hence, and catching sight, it may be, of a number of people coming from Sychar, led by the woman, he went on: "You say, after four months the harvest will come. But the human beings around are the noblest harvest, and one that can be reaped now, for their souls, like autumn fields, are already white for my Father's garner. What a reward for you, my disciples, who are to be the reapers! The sickle gathers fruit that perishes; your preaching will gather fruit to life eternal. You and I, the Sower and the reapers, may well rejoice together! I prepare the ground; you go forth to gather the sheaves."

The villagers who returned with the woman proved very different from the self-righteous people of Judea, who had thought themselves much too good to need any teaching from Christ. On their simpler natures his words fell like seed on good ground, making such an impression that, at their request, he stayed two days with them, to give them fuller instruction. That he did

so was another proof of the difference between him and the teachers of his day, for no Jewish Rabbi would have condescended even to speak to a Samaritan. Christ, moreover, did not for a moment hint at their needing to accept the Jewish religion, as any Rabbi would have held essential. It was the first time salvation had ever been proclaimed thus freely by a Jew.

CHAPTER XVI

CHRIST'S LIFE AT CAPERNAUM

AFTER staying two days at Shechem or Sychar, Christ went on northwards, towards Galilee. The road took him to the city of Samaria, or, rather, round the hill on which it stood. It lay six or seven miles to the north-west, over a broad, comparatively barren ridge, in the centre of a charming valley, shut in by green round-topped hills; itself standing on a grassy hill, chosen by Omri as the site of his capital. Excepting a few mud houses on one end, where the road stretches up to the flat top, the place is now absolutely desolate, though the ruins from the days of Herod the Great, and the wreck of a grand church built by the Crusaders, tell of its long past splendour.

When Christ passed, however, the city was in its glory, for Herod had almost rebuilt it. A temple, dedicated to Augustus the emperor, as a god, rose on the level crown of the hill; its pillars, which still remain, showing how noble it must then have been. A great wall encircling the hill, with huge strongholds at its gates, commanded the admiration of all. A long double line of marble columns lined a grand promenade and chariot drive round the hill; many of the pillars still attesting its magnificence, and there were, moreover, in the city, fine public baths, a theatre, and triumphal arches. We do not read, however, that Christ went into Samaria. Following the road at the foot of the hill, he would cross the plain, and pass, by a slow ascent, northwards, to Engannim, on the great plain of Esdraelon, whence the white houses of Nazareth

shone from their hill nearly twenty miles off, to the north-west.

But he did not purpose going, at this time, to that village. Crossing the hills beside it, he went on to Cana, where, perhaps, Mary still lived. His fame had already spread widely in Galilee, through the reports of pilgrims returning from the Passover. Thus, even though the people of Judea had rejected him, his work among them had prepared for his popularity in the north.

It soon became known at Capernaum, on the Lake of Tiberias, about seventeen miles off, that he had come back to Galilee, after an absence of nine or ten months. The wonderful miracles he had wrought in the south were discussed, alike in the cottage and the mansion. Among others, an official in the palace of Herod Antipas, at Tiberias, who had a house at Capernaum, had heard of the amazing cures he had effected at Jerusalem, and having an only son ill of fever, resolved to ask the miraculous aid which had done so much elsewhere.¹ To prevent any mistake, he went himself to Christ, at Cana, and on arriving, besought him to come down quickly, and heal his child, who was at the point of death. The excessive heat on the lake still causes much fever at some seasons, as in this case, and in that of the mother-in-law of Peter at another time.

The poor man's bearing showed that he had come to Our Lord only by the report of his miracles, and knew nothing of his teaching. "How is it," said Christ, therefore, "that you believe only in the signs and wonders I do? Why do you not receive the truth I preach, and think of me as the healer of souls, rather than only as the healer of the body?" But the poor man was in too great trouble to think of anything but his dying boy. "Sir," cried he, "come down before my child die." He fancied Christ would need to go to Capernaum with him, and perhaps touch the sufferer, to effect a cure, but a proof was to be given that distance made no difference to the Saviour. "Go thy way: thy son

¹ John iv. 46-54.

liveth," said Christ. It was enough, for he could not doubt that Jesus had the power he claimed. His look and voice gave full assurance, and so, no doubt with grateful thanks, he turned his steps once more homewards, believing his son was cured.

It being now afternoon, however, it was impossible to get back that night, by the slow travel of the East, and he had therefore to rest on the way. Next morning he was once more on the road, but ere long some of his slaves came to meet him, with the news that his boy was getting better. "When did the turn come?" asked the rejoicing father. "Yesterday, about one o'clock the fever left him." That was the very time when Jesus told him that his child would live. What could he do but accept such an one as what he claimed to be—the Messiah? nor is it strange to read that when his household heard the facts they believed also.¹

Nothing is told respecting the next months of Our Lord's life. John was now in prison; the priests and Rabbis having roused the fear of Herod Antipas against him, by hinting that he aimed at revolution. It was perhaps necessary, therefore, that Our Lord should for a time give up preaching. His mother and family had returned to Nazareth,² and he probably went to her. Meanwhile the disciples returned to their callings, and the work of Christ was suspended. The whole country was disturbed by what had befallen John, and by a fierce struggle that had taken place in the Temple enclosure itself, between the Roman soldiers of Fort Antonia, on its north-west corner, and some Galileans who had gone up to the Feast of Tabernacles. Always brave, these hardy mountaineers had resisted so vigorously that the legionaries pressed forward into the very courts of the Temple, and hewed down their opponents beside the great altar, mingling their blood with that of the slain beasts, and thus polluting the sacred place.³ The public excitement at such an incident was intense.

¹ John iv. 47-53.

² Mark vi. 3; Luke iv. 16.

³ Luke xiii. 1.

witness.¹ Conscience-struck, they could do nothing, but moved away, to the last man, leaving Jesus alone with the woman, in the midst of the crowd. "Woman," said Christ, on seeing this, "where are thine accusers? did no one condemn thee?" "No one, Lord," answered the poor creature. "Neither shall I," replied Our Lord. "I do not come to be a judge in matters of law. It is their part, not mine, to carry out the case against thee. Go, repent of thy guilt, and sin no more."²

Some fragments of his addresses in these days, which have been preserved, show that, as his end approached, he spoke ever more plainly of his spiritual dignity and claims. In one, pointing, perhaps, to the sun rising over the hills of Moab, in the East, he told his audience that he was the Light of the World—the Fountain of Divine Truth—by whom alone men could be guided in the path of eternal life. His teaching, his life, and his deeds showed this, if those to whom he spoke had not been blinded by their sins. No proof could be more clear that he was not alone, but had his Heavenly Father always with him. This he seems to have often repeated, adding in one case, that God was ever with him, because he did, always, the things that pleased Him: words which none of his followers, even the best, would have dreamed of using, but so appropriate on the lips of one so meek and lowly as Our Lord, that they created a deep and wide impression in his favour.

"If you accept the truth," said he, as the approving murmur swelled round him, "it will make you free." He meant, of course, free from the sins to which they had hitherto been slaves; but they were too self-righteous to understand him, and thought at once of ordinary freedom. The nation was helplessly subject to Rome, whose soldiers garrisoned Jerusalem; but they shut their eyes to this, and spoke as if they were still independent. "Whoever commits sin," continued Christ, "is its slave. To be descended from Abraham

¹ Deut. xiii. 9, 10; xvii. 7; Acts vii. 58.

² John viii. 2-11.

does not help you in this matter. I, God's Son, must make you free, if you are to be free indeed. You call yourselves sons of Abraham, but, in reality, you are not, for God looks not to national descent, but requires spiritual likeness." In that respect, said he, they had no connection with the patriarch. Their spiritual father, in fact, was the devil, not Abraham. If they were, as they claimed to be, children of God, they would love him who spoke. Instead of this, they shut their ears against him. "You are an enemy of the children of God," cried his opponents, "a Samaritan, and, as the Rabbis tell us, are certainly possessed by a devil, else you would not speak thus." "I have not a devil," replied Jesus, "and you dishonour God, who has sent me and honours me, by saying so. I tell you again, that he who believes on me and obeys my voice, shall never taste death." "Whom do you make yourself?" shouted the crowd. "Abraham and the prophets are dead, are you greater than they?" "Abraham," quietly continued Christ, "rejoiced to see my day afar off." "It is 2000 years since Abraham's day," broke in a voice, "and you are not fifty years old yet; do you mean to say that you have seen Abraham?" "I mean to say," replied Jesus, "far more than that—before Abraham was born, I AM." This was the very phrase in which Jehovah had spoken of himself in Egypt, and could only mean a claim to be no less than God. His hearers instantly felt this, and rose in wild fury against one who appeared to them such a blasphemer. Snatching up stones from the rubbish of the unfinished parts of the Temple round, they would fain have killed him on the spot, but he hid himself among the crowd, and in the confusion passed safely out of the throng.¹

In these closing weeks of his life, Our Lord found a home, from time to time, with a family at Bethany, on the east side of the Mount of Olives. He may

¹ John viii. 31-59.

threw in their lot with Christ, becoming his constant companions and devoted followers till his death. That they thus gave up their little all for his sake showed their fitness to be his chosen friends.

Henceforth, our Lord appears to have lived in the house of Peter while in Capernaum, the household consisting of the apostle, his wife and her mother, Andrew, his brother, and Jesus, the Divine guest. It must have been a pleasant home, looking out as it did on the lake with its blue waters, and its wall of cliffs on the other side, seamed with gullies by winter torrents, and varying its tints in the changing light. The wide green marsh at the head of the lake, where the Jordan enters it, was only three or four miles off to the north, and the soft hills to the west and north served as a foil to higher and higher mountains behind, closing in the far distance with the snowy heights of Lebanon. Nor was the town itself other than attractive, with its three or four thousand inhabitants; its picturesque town wall with fortified gates; its whitewashed, flat-roofed houses of black basalt; its great synagogue; its barracks and castle—all intermingled with the verdure of palms, figs, olives, and gardens; the houses running down to the shore, and up to the low slopes behind.

It appears to have been on a Friday that Jesus summoned Peter and his companions. As the sun set, the beginning of the Sabbath was announced by three blasts of a horn from the roof of the synagogue; the peasants, at the sound, ceasing their toil in the fields and vineyards, the townsfolk closing their business for the week, and every household kindling its Sabbath light. Jesus did not go that night to Peter's house, but withdrew to the hills, spending the hours till morning in devotion. Now, at last, he was finally giving himself, without reserve, to the great work for which he had come into the world, and nothing could so prepare him for it as communion with The Father, who had sent him.

The morning prayer in the synagogue began at nine, and as the news had spread of the great miracle worker

being in the town, there was a large congregation. Women came to their own gallery, by back streets, as required of them; men gathered in great numbers, moving with slow Sabbath steps. The elders had taken their places, the Reader recited the eighteen prayers, broken by the *Amens* of the people; the first lesson for the day had been read, all rising and turning reverently towards the shrine where the Law was kept; prayers had been finished, the congregation repeating the words, and the first part of the service had closed with the second lesson.

A short address from a Rabbi, or some one regarded as equally worthy to speak, came next. The Reader forthwith called on Jesus, who was present, to take this part. What he said is not told, but its freshness, compared with the addresses of the Rabbis, had a charm for all. Wire-drawn, hair-splitting discussions, or some trifle of no importance, backed by texts twisted into the most fanciful applications, and hedged by appeals to the words of some former Rabbi, left the hearers only husks for food. Instead of this, the words of Christ were weighty and living: addressed to the heart, and dealing with high religious and moral duties, and he spoke, moreover, as claiming authority of his own. "New Teaching!" said his hearers to each other, "and with authority, not like the Rabbis."

But if they were struck by his teaching they were still more so by what followed. Among those present in the synagogue was an unhappy man,¹ the victim of a calamity which we cannot now understand—"possessed by a spirit of an unclean devil"—that is, a spirit that drove him to haunt burial-places, and other spots specially unclean in the eyes of Jews. The service had apparently gone on quietly till Jesus began to speak, but he had no sooner done so than the poor man rose from the ground, where, like the rest, he had been sitting, and with a wild howl that must have curdled the blood of

¹ Mark i. 22-26; Luke iv. 32-36.



THE ROLL OF THE SAMARITAN PENTATEUCH IN ITS COVER.

all present, yelled out, "Ha! what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee whom thou art; the Holy One of God." Among the crowd Jesus alone remained calm. "Hold thy peace," said he indignantly, "and come out of him," for he would have no honour from such a source. The demon felt its master, but, demon to the last, threw the man down in the midst of the congregation, tearing him as it did so, and then, with a wild shriek, fled out of him.

Service over, he left with his four disciples for Peter's house, but only to find that the mother-in-law of his host lay ill of the local fever. Going, forthwith, into the chamber, and bending over the sick woman, he rebuked her disease, and raised her by the hand, doubtless with words and looks that made her his for ever. The fever was gone, and she was forthwith able to prepare the forenoon meal for the household.

The Sabbath would not be over yet for some hours, and till it was past, rest was secured for all. As soon, however, as the synagogue horn announced that the stars were beginning to shine out and that the Sabbath was ended, the people began to gather from all the town, and even from the country round, bringing the sick to the great healer; it being now lawful to do so, as the week-day had commenced. Once and again, when I was in Palestine, the hope that my companion or myself might be a doctor, crowded the door of our tent in the evening with the afflicted, and the excitement would, of course, be immeasurably more with Christ, of whose miracles every one had now heard. Fevers, convulsions, asthma, wasting consumption, dropsy, palsy, the deaf, the dumb, the brain-affected, and "many that were possessed with devils," that last worst symptom of the distress and confusion of the times, were gathered round the house.¹

The sight of so much misery brought Jesus at once

¹ Matt. viii. 15-17; Luke iv. 40.

into the throng. With a command, "Hold thy peace, and come out of him," a poor demoniac was presently in his right mind. The helpless lame stood up at the words, "I say unto thee, arise." The paralytic left his couch at the sound of, "Take up thy bed and walk."

To some he had a word of comfort that dispelled alarm, and drove away its secret cause. "Be it unto thee according to thy faith." "Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmities." "Be of good cheer, my son, thy sins are forgiven thee." No wonder that the evangelist saw in such a spectacle the fulfilment of the words of the prophet, "Himself took our infirmities and bore our diseases."

The night which followed brought Our Lord no repose. He knew that the multitude sought him more from wonder, or curiosity, or desire for some benefit to their own health or that of their friends, than from eagerness to learn the ways of God. The excitement disturbed him. Rising therefore long before daybreak, he made his way, once more, to the hills, where all was still, and refreshed his spirit by long prayer and silent meditation. Peter and Andrew noting in the morning his absence, but little able to enter into his frame of mind, were at a loss to imagine why he should have left. Hasting to the uplands, however, as the most likely place to find him, they at last did so. Crowds had already begun to gather round the house before they left; would he not return and teach and heal them? But he had higher duties than they knew. "I have not come to heal the sick," said he, "but to announce and spread the new Kingdom of God. Let us therefore go to the neighbouring towns, for I must preach to them also, as well as to Capernaum."¹ Nor would he return till some of the people had found him out, and joined with his disciples in praying him to do so.

¹ See Mark i. 36; Luke iv. 43.

CHAPTER XVII

A MISSIONARY CIRCUIT, AND RETURN TO THE LAKE

THE missionary journey now begun was the first of a number in which Jesus visited every part of Galilee,¹ preaching and teaching in the synagogues or in the open air. The country, though very hilly and now almost desolate, was in those days thickly peopled. Ruins of ancient villages and towns lie among weeds and thorns, at short intervals, over the whole land, while the remains of fine synagogues, everywhere, show the zeal for the Law once felt by the Galileans. In striking contrast to the hills of Judea, and to a far greater degree than even those of Samaria, the green slopes and valleys sparkle with copious streams; never dry. Jesus now went north along the shore of Lake Huleh—the ancient Merom, which lies cradled among the hills in a charming plain, covered at its upper end by miles of tall reed-beds, amidst which Herod was wont to hunt the wild boar in his young days. The people were mainly descendants of members of the Ten Tribes who had wandered back from Assyria after its fall, and settled here in the north, rather than in their former country, Samaria, to keep aloof from the mixed race, more than half heathen, that now occupied the land of their fathers. The prophets had foretold the return of the Ten Tribes, and the population of Galilee was the fulfilment of their predictions.

A single incident of this journey is recorded at some length. In one of the towns he visited, a man “full of

¹ Luke iv. 43; Mark i. 39.

leprosy" suddenly came to him. This fell disease, still common in Palestine, is specially terrible from the painful and loathsome sufferings it causes, and also from the fact that a leper is cut off from mingling with his fellow-men. Groups of these unfortunates may still be seen, crouched at the wall below the Jaffa Gate of Jerusalem; a tin dish lying before them to receive chance alms, which can be thrown into it from a distance. Others may be found begging at the little stone arch over the dry bed of the Kedron, in the valley of Jehoshaphat, close to Gethsemane. There is a leper hospital also in the city, affording a grateful retreat to not a few, but still leprosy is only too common over all the land. It begins with specks on the eyelids and on the palms, gradually spreading over the body, bleaching the hair white wherever they appear, crusting the affected parts with white scales, and causing terrible sores and swellings. From the skin the disease eats inwards to the bones, rotting the whole body piecemeal. The Jews held it as "the stroke of God," and kept aloof from it from fear of defilement, for it does not seem to be really infectious, and hence lepers were allowed to sit in a place of their own in the synagogues. Indeed, I recently saw a young man among crowds of visitors at the Museum at Christiania, with his face one mass of the white scales of leprosy, and he would certainly have been kept apart had the disease been catching. The worst feature is that it descends to the fourth generation. In Christ's day no leper could live in a walled town, though he might in an open village. But, wherever he was, he was required to have his outer garment rent, as a sign of deep grief, to go bareheaded, and to cover his beard with his mantle, as if in lamentation at his own virtual death. He had further to warn passers-by to keep away from him, by calling out "Unclean, unclean"; nor could he speak to any one, or receive or return a salutation, since, in the East, this involves an embrace.

The news of the wonderful cures wrought by Christ had reached the unhappy man who now made his way

to the Healer, breaking the Law to do so. Falling at his feet, he won the heart of Our Lord by perhaps the first open confession of simple and earnest faith he had received.¹ "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean!" Such frank belief in his power and submission to his will at once secured what was asked. Touching him and uttering the words, "I will; be thou clean," the suppliant was a leper no longer. No Rabbi, or strict Jew, would have come near him, but Jesus was ready to make himself "unclean" to heal the wretched. He could not have shown more strikingly how little he thought of outward forms when they stood in the way of doing good.

Such a cure was certain to raise public excitement, if generally known, and this was dangerous while the Baptist was still lying in prison on a charge of having stirred up the people. The cured man was told therefore not to speak about what had happened, but quietly to go to Jerusalem and show himself, as clean, to the priests on duty, that he might, after the usual ceremonies, get a certificate of his restoration to health. His joy at being healed was, however, too deep for silence, and the result of his spreading the news of his cure was that Jesus could no longer enter any town or city, from the commotion his presence excited. Nor could he escape the multitudes who gathered round him, even by withdrawing to solitary parts, so that he had, apparently, to return to Capernaum.

Yet, notwithstanding his caution, the report of his growing influence reached the Church authorities in Jerusalem. That he taught without a licence from them stirred their jealousy, and it could be no secret that his teaching was in some respects very different from theirs. Already, therefore, they had set men on his track, to note his words, that they might bring the meshes of the Law over him; and some of these spies were now in Capernaum. This odious task was assigned

¹ Matt. viii. 2-4.

to Scribes, the "learned" of Judaism; known often by the name "Rabbi," which was much the same as our "Reverend," or, in some cases, as "Doctor." The Law, as amplified by Ezra and the Scribes, being the one study of the nation, and all public and private life being controlled by its precepts, thus widely extended, the order had immense influence. They were the divines, the lawyers, the lawmakers, and the political leaders of Israel. Nothing could be done without them; no one could venture to differ from them. Men greeted them humbly as they passed, rising before them. They sat in the chief seats in the synagogues, and had the place of honour everywhere. Jerusalem was their headquarters, but they were found in all synagogue towns. In the capital they had the majority in the Jewish Church courts, which could inflict grievous sentences on those condemned by them, and in the country they were the leading members of the local courts connected with each synagogue. Their activity never ceased. Living, for the most part, by trade or a handicraft, they passed from place to place, uniting business with teaching on their journeys.

The Scribes belonged for the most part to the great Pharisee party, which, however, included many who were not Scribes. Pharisee means "the separated," and had originally been taken by men who devoted themselves to the observance of the Law as interpreted by Ezra and the Scribes of his day. The precepts laid down by successive generations of Scribes and Rabbis, gradually increasing, there came to be grades of "holiness," even among the Pharisees; no one being held "blameless" as touching "the righteousness in the Law,"¹ who had not passed through six inferior steps and reached the seventh, which was the highest. Observance of many thousand precepts, however, demanded such constant attention, that to attain this perfection was impossible without devoting one's self fanatically to doing so. Any

¹ Phil. iii. 6.

business, even if carried on with scrupulous watchfulness, was certain to lead to defilement, by too near contact with men at large. The Pharisees of the highest grade belonged therefore largely to the richer classes.

Among such a large body there were, of course, men of very different characters. Zacharias, the father of John, Nicodemus, and St. Paul, were Pharisees, but the majority had already in Christ's day, sunk to mere formalists, and ultimately became so unpopular for their insincerity, even with their own nation, that the name was finally used for a hypocrite and a knave: the Rabbis themselves disowning it. In the days of Christ, however, they were still in high honour.

Soon after Our Lord's arrival at Capernaum an incident occurred which led to his first open breach with these two all-powerful bodies.¹ The crowds had gathered in such numbers to Peter's house that the court before it was thronged. Among the audience were a number of Pharisees, some of them Scribes and Rabbis. All these were spies, gathered to see if they could find anything in what might be said or done, that could bring the new teacher within the grasp of the "Law."

It appears as if Peter's house had been one of two storeys, and that Our Lord spoke from the upper floor, so as to address both the people in the house and in the court. Suddenly a commotion in the throng showed that some one sought admission and could not obtain it. A poor young man, helpless from paralysis, had been brought on a pallet by four bearers, to get into the presence of the great Healer. Finding they could not push through, and resolved to gain their point, they carried the sick man up the rough stone steps at the side of the house, and thus got to the roof, where, as in many good houses still, there was a kind of hatch, closed in the rainy months, but opened in summer, to let the family out to the roof from inside, by a short ladder. Raising this, the bearers had gained their end. By tying

¹ Matt. ix. 2-8; Mark ii. 1-12; Luke v. 17-20.

cords to the four corners of the hammock, and letting it down, the sufferer was at the feet of Our Lord. But outward troubles were not his worst. Looking on his affliction as a punishment of sin, he was even more stricken in soul than in body. He could not speak, but his eyes told the story, which Christ read at a glance, and pitied, in an endearing word. "My child," said he, "thy sins are forgiven thee." Such language no Rabbi would have used, but it came with impressive force from one who never admitted that he was himself a sinner, although he demanded sinlessness even in the inmost thoughts. To pardon sin was to claim divine authority, for the forgiveness of the penitent belongs to God alone.

The Rabbis felt this. Here was one, not a member of their body, who dared to forgive sin of his own authority, and in his own name. Whispers, head-shakings, and dark looks, showed that they were greatly excited. "It is blasphemy," they muttered, "for any man to talk of his forgiving sins, and the Law condemns the blasphemer to be stoned to death. No one can forgive sins but God."

This was the turning-point in the life of Our Lord, for the accusation of blasphemy, now raised, was to bring him to the Cross in the end, and he knew it. His whole religious teaching was the opposite of that of his accusers. With him, a broken and contrite heart was everything, and the minute observance of outward forms nothing; but to them these forms were the essence of religion. The charge of blasphemy was only a catch by which to lay hold on one who hated pretences and demanded sincerity, not mere empty rites. He knew they would put the worst construction on all he said, but it did not disturb him. Without waiting for their open attack, he suddenly asked, "Which is easier? To say to this paralytic, 'Thy sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up thy bed and walk'?" No one could tell whether the sick man's sins were really forgiven; but there could be no deception in raising a living corpse to life and strength. Turning to the pallet, therefore, without waiting an answer, he continued, "That ye may know

that the Son of Man"—a Jewish name for the Messiah,—“has authority on earth to forgive sins, I say, Rise up, young man, take up the mat on which you have been lying, and go home.” It was enough. Slowly realising what had been said, the sick one rose, little by little, his eyes fixed on his deliverer, till at last he stood erect before him. He would, no doubt, have kneeled, next moment, in adoration, but he could not be allowed to stay. Without saying a word, Jesus motioned him to retire, and he did so, his eyes still fixed on his helper, as he made his way through the awe-stricken crowd. Meanwhile, Our Lord himself left the room, sad at heart, for the shadow of the Cross had fallen on his soul.

A number of disciples had, we may imagine, been gained by this time, but Christ's personal followers were still limited to the few whom he had first “called.” Another was now to be added. Among those specially impressed by his teaching at Capernaum, a publican named Matthew or Levi, had shown himself, in Christ's unerring judgment, worthy of a place among his apostles. His office was universally hated and disreputable, but that weighed nothing with Our Lord. Publicans were those who collected the taxes imposed by the Romans, and thus, to all Jews, seemed traitors, serving the heathen oppressors of Israel. They could not enter a synagogue, and were avoided by all. Neither they nor their family could bear witness in a Jewish court, nor would the poorest beggar accept an alms from their polluted hand. That Christ should choose a publican as a follower, was therefore to brave inveterate public opinion, and to discredit both himself and his work. No Rabbi would enter the house of such a person, and a Pharisee, if by chance his clothes touched one as he passed, at once had them washed, to remove the defilement. But Christ taught that sincere penitence,—which is another name for deep sorrow for sin, and firm resolve, with God's help, to do better—was demanded from all men alike, and that God accepted any one in whom this was shown; no matter to what

class he belonged, or what his former life had been. Nor would he, like those around him, condemn a whole body of men. If many in it were worthless, so much the greater was the need to try to reclaim them. Moreover, the duties of a tax-gatherer were perfectly lawful, and in some cases, among which, doubtless, was that of Matthew, they were carried out with perfect uprightness.

Matthew was busy in his office on the eventful day when Jesus, in passing, invited him to become his disciple. A word and a look sufficed. Resigning his position at the earliest opportunity, after settling business matters connected with it, he left all and followed his new Master. Nothing could have been more hateful to the Rabbis than such a slight on their teaching, as the choice of the publican as an apostle, but Christ had no hesitation in the matter. He would show in the most marked way that all were free to seek him, and that the gift of eternal life which he brought, was not for a class but for mankind, however degraded or despised. There was to be no caste in Christianity.

Matthew was greatly moved by treatment so generous, shown so bravely in the face of public opinion to one who had hitherto known only disrespect and open contempt. For the first time he had been treated like a man, not scorned like a leper. To express his joy and gratitude by a "great feast" was the least he could do, and accordingly he invited a number of friends, necessarily all of doubtful calling or character,—for such alone must have made up his little world—to celebrate the new era opened to them and himself. For the respect paid him, in the face of public prejudice, proved that they still had a friend, and might from his kindly bearing, feel once more that long lost self-respect which is the earnest of true reform in the degraded. An invitation to this gathering, which any Rabbi or Scribe would have taken as an insult, was at once accepted by Our Lord.¹

¹ Luke v. 29-39; Mark ii. 15-22; Matt. ix. 10-17.

Till this time some of the Pharisees had treated Christ with politeness and had asked him to their houses and table, but the choice of a publican as an apostle, and his eating with people of that class, shocked Jewish ideas. It was as if a white man, before the abolition of slavery in America, had treated a coloured person as an equal; a thing not to be conceived! It must have been a hard trial even for the disciples, for they had all the prejudices of their race so strongly that even after our Lord's ascension, St. Peter was distressed at the idea of entering the house of one not a Jew, though a Roman officer, or of eating with him;¹ two breaches of the Law far less offensive than Christ's going to Matthew's house, and eating with publicans and 'sinners.' The Apostle James, moreover, was a Nazarite—and, as such, a strict Jew—till his death. When therefore the Rabbis put the question to them, "Why Jesus thus, as they held, outraged the Law," they were sadly perplexed, and came to their Master for an explanation. No answer could have been more kind and tender; "To whom *should* I go but to such as these? The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. Turn to the prophets, whom you honour, and think what Hosea means by saying, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,'—true acts of love, not outward forms—for I have come not to call the self-righteous, but to invite sinners to repentance."

There were still other grounds of trouble and complaint. Some disciples of the Baptist were disturbed and offended by noticing that, whereas their master and they, like the Rabbis, fasted often and followed set rules in prayer, the disciples of Christ neglected both fasting and the rules as to posture and other details laid down as necessary in devotion.² Moses had appointed only one fast in the year, on the Day of Atonement, but the Rabbis had added many, both public and private; some of them, like the Pharisee in the parable, fasting two

¹ Acts x. 14, 28.

² Matt. ix. 14 ff.; Mark ii. 18 ff.; Luke v. 33 ff.

days each week or even more.¹ The Scriptures left every one free to pray as his heart urged him, but the Rabbis had laid down endless rules, which needed to be learned and practised with scrupulous exactness to make prayer of any worth. Questioned on these matters by the disciples of John, the followers of Our Lord found it hard to answer, and carried their difficulty to their Master. We have only his reply as to fasting, "While with you, my disciples, I am like the bridegroom with his companions, during the rejoicings at a marriage. Could he ask them to fast while he was with them? When I am no longer with you, you will have to fast, whether you choose or not, for privation awaits you, and it will be time enough to begin when you cannot help it."² Then, seizing the opportunity, he spoke of the Baptist's position in relation to himself. John had sought to reform the Jewish Church, while retaining all the forms and rules in worship and life required by the Rabbis, but these could not be harmonised with his teaching. To attempt it was as vain as trying to mend the rents of a worn-out garment with new cloth; the rents would only grow worse. Or it was like putting new wine into worn-out skin-bottles, which must burst when the wine fermented. New teaching, such as his, needed a new system, as new wine must be put into new skin-bottles, to preserve both. Thus Christ broke openly with the religious ideas of his day, and put them aside.

The widening success of his work had now made it necessary to select from his followers such as might hereafter become his apostles or missionaries. The band chosen was limited to twelve; perhaps in allusion to the Twelve Tribes of Jewish history. As his friends and intimate companions, they were to enjoy his fullest confidence, and to be trained to go forth and spread Christianity after his death. When about to select them, he spent the whole previous night in solitary prayer, and, in the morning, having returned to his

¹ Luke xviii. 12.

² Matt. ix. 14 ff.; Mark ii. 18-22; Luke v. 33-39.

disciples, now a considerable band, appointed twelve.¹ He had only the lowly from whom to choose, but those honoured thus were, with one exception, true-hearted and worthy.

The selection was strangely various. Matthew was at once a publican and a Levite; but there was a Simon who had belonged to the Zealots or irreconcilables of the nation. Peter, we know, had a wife, and tradition alleges that all the rest, except Thomas and the sons of Zebedee, were also married. Seven of the twelve belonged to Capernaum, Peter and his brother Andrew, James and John, James the Little, and Jude, further known as Lebbæus, "the stout-hearted," or Thaddæus, "the brave," and Matthew the publican. Philip belonged to Bethsaida, close to the favoured town; Nathanael, or Bartholomew, came from Cana, behind Nazareth; Thomas, known also as Didymus, or "The Twin," was born it is not said where; Simon, the Zealot, came perhaps from some part of Judea, and—Judas, the traitor, from Kerioth, in the south of Judah.

¹ Matt. x. 2 ff.; Mark iii. 13-19; Luke vi. 12-19.

CHAPTER XVIII

CHOICE OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES, AND THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

OF the twelve apostles, at least four, James and John, James the Younger, and Jude, seem to have been his relations, or connections, though one tradition adds Thomas also to these. That Matthew, a Levite, had stooped to become a Roman tax-collector, shows that some members of his order had a sore struggle to live. As a rule the apostles were poor. The fishermen of our own coasts are humble enough, and those of the Sea of Galilee in Christ's day were probably as lowly, though a respect, unknown among us, is paid in the East to even the poorest, simply as men, creating a self-respect not found in the same class among ourselves. Our fishermen, moreover, are often wholly illiterate, but the New Testament shows that men of whom John, and Peter, were no doubt fair representatives, were very far from being ignorant.

Peter, the host of our Lord at Capernaum, always occupies the first place in the list of the Twelve. Like a true Galilean, he was impulsive and energetic; speaking his mind on the instant, and thus always ready to speak for the rest; but though the first to draw the sword for his Master, he was also the first to deny him. The contrast between him and John is striking. He recognised Christ first at the Lake of Galilee after the resurrection; but while he waited till the boat reached the shore, Peter leaped forthwith into the lake, and was the first to reach Our Lord's feet. His excitable

nature throws him at times off his guard, but though for a moment surprised into denying Christ, a look melts him, and tradition only fills up a true picture, when it tells us that he rose each night, through life, at the hour when he had sinned, to crave forgiveness, or when it speaks of him as at last crucified head downwards, thinking himself unworthy of a nearer approach to the same death as his Lord.

James and John were men of a different mould. Their hot zeal, flaming up at any opposition, obtained for them, from Jesus, the name of the Sons of Thunder.¹ They would have called down lightning on an inhospitable village, and wished to silence one who spoke in Our Lord's name, because he had not his formal authority to do so. In James, the apostles had their earliest martyr, but John survived all his brethren. In his case, however, as possibly in that of James, his rash warmth soon passed into the steady glow of devotion. Of all the Twelve he realised most his master's spirit, thinking less on his outward life than on the divine words which revealed his inner perfection. We owe to him, in his Gospel, an image of Our Lord such as only he could have painted. Loving him beyond the others, he drew towards himself a like love in return; for if he leaned on Christ's bosom at the Last Supper, it was only the reward of an affection which presently brought him, alone, to the foot of the Cross.

Of Andrew, the brother of St. Peter, we know nothing after Christ's death. Tradition speaks of him as having gone to Scythia, and on this ground the Russians have made him their national saint. This, however, is only one story out of several, probably all without historical foundation. Philip is said to have been originally a chariot-driver; Bartholomew or Nathanael, a shepherd or gardener. That Judea should have been so poorly represented, shows the bigotry of its people, though the presence of the family of Bethany, and we know not

¹ Mark iii. 17.

how many other disciples even in that district, is not to be forgotten.

Such followers, hitherto worshippers of the Rabbis, with their endless legal rules and formal religion, must have needed a divine patience to open their hearts to the wide charity and deep earnestness of the new faith. No wonder, therefore, that we read of Christ calling them "unbelieving"—"of little understanding," "hardened," "fearful," "worldly," and "of little faith." Yet they were endeared to him by the fact that they continued with him to the end, and in the remembrance of this, he could only see in them his "brethren," his "fellow-workers," his "little children." It was not till he was gone that they realised the exceeding honour of such relations to him; but the remembrance of these thenceforward, was the glory of their lives.

Numerous fragments of the discourses of Our Lord are preserved in the Gospels, but no continuous address is given except the Sermon on the Mount, which appears to have been delivered immediately after the choice of the Twelve. He had gone with his disciples to some secluded spot in the hills round the lake, to transact that all-important matter without interruption, but, this over, returned towards the shore. On his way, however, he found a great crowd looking for him, having with them not a few sick, that he might heal them. Ever pitiful, this was forthwith done, but, now, as such a multitude was gathered, he took the opportunity to address them. The scene of the memorable discourse was perhaps a height the two ends of which rise into low peaks, known as the Horns of Hattin. Five miles off, the Lake of Galilee lies far below, with the city of Tiberias on the shore; the path to it sinking in a continual descent over green slopes. Hattin is a rough outburst of black basalt, the two peaks forming part of the sides of an ancient crater. Entering this, there is a large level space strewn with volcanic stones of all sizes, and thick with tall weeds. From the eastern edge the view is magnificent; the eye sweeping over the whole

lake below, beyond broad descending undulations of green; the tableland of cliff rising on the other side, shutting out the country beyond. A very large crowd could gather in Hattin, and a teacher could easily seat himself on some point above them, so as to make his voice reach far and near.

In the Sermon on the Mount there is no allusion to circumcision, the rite which admitted into the existing Church, and the proud distinction of a Jew from a heathen. It was to be no longer the condition of admission into the "Kingdom of God."

Nor is more favour shown to any of the multiplied forms on which the nation relied. "The righteousness of the Law," that is, the exact fulfilment of the multitudinous precepts of the Rabbis, gives place to a demand for the righteousness of heart and life. Instead of a religion only for Jews and their converts, it establishes one of character and life. All are welcomed who heartily accept Jesus as the Messiah, and honestly repent before God. Suffering in this world, which had hitherto been regarded as a mark of the divine displeasure, is made, to the Christian rightly bearing it, the pledge of heavenly reward. For the first time in the history of religion there is no mention of a priesthood, or offerings, or a Temple, or ceremonial rites, or symbolical worship. We hear only of holy love and true righteousness.

The opening verses¹ speak comfort much needed in every age, but especially in the early years of our faith, to those faithful to their Master under bitter trial. To suffer for the truth, he tells them, is only what the godly have had to endure in every generation.

He next passes to the duties and true dignity of his disciples. They are the salt of the earth; the light of the world; a city set on a hill; and must bear themselves accordingly. His personal example is to be their standard and pattern. Failure, however, is human, and hence they must remember that what appears salt,

¹ Matt. v. 3-12.

but is only earth with a little salt through it, may lose its saltiness, and this, once lost, can never be restored. Absolute sincerity and devotedness alone can make them safe.

Passing to details, he proceeded to show that so far from being opposed to the Law, as the Rabbis alleged, he came to fulfil, not to destroy it. Their worthless additions to it would perish, but no part of its moral or religious teaching should pass away for ever. So far from slighting that, he who should break even one of its least demands would be called least in his kingdom.

The Scribes and Pharisees were fancied especially righteous, from their laborious observance of the thousand "traditions of the Elders;" the rules laid down by Rabbis since the days of Ezra. This, however, would not satisfy Christ.

Murder,¹ for example, according to them, was only wilfully killing. With Our Lord, on the contrary, the passion from which the crime rises provoked the anger of God, and if not followed by repentance would draw down His wrath hereafter. The heart that hates is arraigned, not merely the hand that strikes.

To interrupt a sacrifice, it was held, well-nigh destroyed its value, but he required it to be stopped at once by any one who remembered having wronged another; nor was he to finish it till he had made peace with the injured one. As the debtor is seized and flung into prison by the creditor when they meet, to lie there till he has paid the last farthing, the wrath of God would burn against any one who pretended to worship while anger was in his heart.

The Rabbis taught that a wife might be sent away for spoiling a dinner, or if she were less handsome than some new face, and she was free to marry at once, on receiving a certificate of dismissal. Contrary to this, Christ taught that marriage could only be dissolved for unfaithfulness, and that any woman put away for

¹ Matt. v. 20-26; 1 John iii. 15.

less, was still a wife, and, as such, could not remarry.¹ The copious use of oaths on all occasions has always been common in the East, and the refinements of the Rabbis had increased the evil. Men were told how they might overreach each other by sly tricks in the words of an oath, which no one could detect at the time. If, for example, they did not expressly name God, or the Temple, or the Altar, an oath had no binding force. The support of a parent was excused by the pretence that one's means were vowed to God. Oaths were to be avoided by Christians; their word should be enough.²

The Law taught that an eye was to be given for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; a principle which in Christ's day was obeyed by payments of money, according to the offence. A hand, a foot, or an eye had its market value, and this was always exacted. Christ was as little inclined as any one to let crime go unpunished, but he demanded that no disciple of his should ever cherish revenge. To violence they were to oppose meekness. They were to bear, to yield, to give; not standing angrily on their rights in each petty case, but showing a spirit of love and gentleness worthy of their profession.³

The Jews thought of Jehovah only as their national God, though supreme over the world, and, as a rule, took for granted that exact obedience to the precepts of the Rabbis secured one's welfare, as a right, in the world to come. Indeed, as the children of Abraham, they believed that they would all have a place in Paradise. Fanatically proud as the favourites of Heaven, they hated and despised the rest of mankind. Nor did their bitterness end with this. Among themselves there were distinct parties equally abhorrent to each other. The Rabbi hated the priest, the Pharisee detested the Sadducee, and all alike hated the humbler classes, who had not leisure to keep the Rabbinical ordinances, or whose occupations were in themselves more or less

¹ Matt. v. 27-32.

² Matt. v. 33-37.

³ Matt. v. 38-42.

contrary to them. Their hatred of all who were not Jews was morbid. They were bound to be friendly and humane to a neighbour, but that, they held, meant only to a Jew. Toward the Samaritan or the Gentile there was no pity. Nor was the sentiment of human brotherhood much more advanced in any other race in antiquity. Two nations who were united by treaties respected each other's rights, but where there was no such bond, each plundered and murdered the other without scruple. The idea that all men were brethren had not as yet been proclaimed by any religion.

All this, however, was now to be changed. "Ye have heard," said Christ,¹ "that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy; but I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the Gentiles the same? Ye must, therefore, be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Christianity was to know nothing of national hatreds. The world was to be a common brotherhood. No change could be greater than such teaching would effect if men carried it out. War, slavery, tyranny, and every form of selfishness would pass away.

Almsgiving was so highly extolled by the Rabbis that the usual word for it was "righteousness." The spirit of charity might be wanting; the outward act was enough. Hence, in too many cases men fancied that to give alms was to secure, as by a payment, the favour of God hereafter. Against such hypocrisy, or acting,² Christ warns his followers: "Take heed that you do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them; else

¹ Matt. v. 43-48, R.V.

² The Greek word, "hypocritēs," means an actor, then a feigner, dissembler, or make-believe.

ye have no reward with your Father in heaven. Therefore, when you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. I tell you, in all earnestness, they have received their reward: there is none for such mock charity in the world to come. But when you give alms, do it secretly; for love, not for show or pretence, and your Father, who sees in secret, will recompense thee.”¹ Unless done for its own sake, good lost its worth to the doer.

Even prayer, the cry of the heart to God, had become the subject of endless rules in Christ's day; its value being made to depend on the exact repetition of set forms, with due postures, and a correct adjustment of little charms called phylacteries,—‘safeguards,’ or ‘protectors’—on the arm and forehead,—rather than on the feelings of the worshippers. While there were, no doubt, many sincerely religious, others sought credit by affecting special fervour, and parading their devotions before the public. Not content with larger phylacteries than were common, and larger tassels at the corners of their scarf, as a sign of extra godliness, they pretended that the long prayers of the synagogues were too short, and repeated them over and over to show their piety. All this Christ sternly condemned. Sincerity alone gave prayer its worth, and would court retirement rather than seek notice.

To assist his disciples, Our Lord proceeded to give them a model prayer. “After this manner,” said he, “pray ye²: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.” He only, it was added, is forgiven by God, who has already forgiven his fellows.

¹ Matt. vi. 1-4, R.V. A few words of paraphrase are introduced.

² Matt. vi. 9-13, R.V.

Moses had appointed one fast in the year—that of the Day of Atonement, but to this the Rabbis had added two a week, besides others on special anniversaries, while private fasts also were commanded. Nothing in religion offered greater facility for pretence. While fasting, a Jew strewed ashes on his head, left his beard untrimmed, his face unwashed, his head unanointed, and wore black



PHYLACTERIES.

clothing of the meanest kind. Indeed, all the outward signs of mourning were displayed. Sincerity was so often wanting that even the heathen scoffed at the mockery, and it was still more abhorrent to Christ. His disciples, when they fasted, were to take care not to put on sad looks like the hypocrites around them, for they disfigured their faces, to let men see that they were fasting. They would get no reward hereafter. "But

thou," he went on, "when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face; that thou be not seen of men to fast, but of thy Father who is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall recompense thee."¹

He had already uttered a caution against wordliness; he now adds another: "Heap not up for yourselves treasures of coin, or costly robes, or aught else that men accumulate, for the moth eats the one and the rust the other, while thieves dig through the mud walls and carry off both. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes, and where thieves do not break through and steal. If your treasure be on earth, you will be careless of heaven; but if it be in heaven, your heart will be there. Yet, you need wisdom from God to lead you to this. As light enters the body only if the eye be sound, so it enters the soul only if the heart be right. If you make money your idol, you cannot strive both for it and for the Kingdom of God. It is like trying to serve two masters. If true to the one, you cannot be so to the other. He who really trusts God will feel sure that his earthly wants will be supplied. Do not, therefore, fret about food or clothing. Your life, which God preserves, is more than food, and your body than raiment. Look at the birds; they neither sow, nor reap, nor gather into barns, and yet are fed by Our Heavenly Father. Are you not much better than they? No one, let him try ever so much, can add anything to his life. Why, moreover, are you so concerned about clothing? Look at the wild lilies,² so fair and beautiful. They neither toil nor spin, and yet Solomon, in his royal robes, was not arrayed like one of them. But if God so clothe even the grass of the field, which grows to-day and is cut down and used to heat an oven to-morrow, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Leave it to the heathen to fret about such things; your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

¹ Matt. vi. 17, 18, R.V. (paraphrased).

² Apparently the narcissus.

Seek, therefore, first, of all, his kingdom and righteousness, and all these things shall be added. Be not anxious for the morrow. Each day has its own sufficient cares."¹

The narrow bigotry which embittered Jewish life by its harsh judgments and bitter hatreds, was contrary to the spirit of the new religion.² Christianity could not suffer them, but required kindly feelings in all things. The Rabbis too often showed bitter harshness, and in this respect were like blind men who could not pretend to be guides of others. To examine one's self is better than to pass judgment on our neighbour, and it is rank hypocrisy to be eager to take the mote from any one's eye while there is a beam in one's own.

Passing next to the prospects of his disciples, Christ told them that as they went about speaking of the new Kingdom of God, they would find it often blasphemed and slandered. In such a case they were to be silent, for to spend words in such cases would be only like casting what is good for man to the street dogs, or pearls to wild swine. Help from above would be needed in their office, but God would freely grant it. He would no more refuse it than an earthly father would refuse his child what it required. The golden rule in their dealings should be to treat others as they would themselves wish to be treated.

A few solemn warnings concluded the discourse.³ They must walk in the narrow path of a virtuous life, and avoid the easy and broad road of self-indulgence and sin. Avoid unworthy teachers, said he—wolves in sheep's clothing. Look at their lives, for you will know them as you know trees, by their fruit. Such care would be needed, for teachers would abound whom he would disown at the great day.

"Every one, now or hereafter," said he in conclusion, "who hears these sayings of mine and obeys them, is like a man who, in building a house, dug deep and laid

¹ Matt. vi. 19-34 (paraphrased). ² Matt. vii. 1-12 ; Luke vi. 37-42.

³ Matt. vii. 15-29.

the foundations on the rock. The winter rains fell, the torrents rose, and the storms blew, and beat upon that house, but could not shake it, because it was founded on the rock. But every one who hears them and does not obey them, is like a foolish man, who, without laying a foundation, built his house on the sandy earth. And the rain descended, the torrents rushed down, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and straightway it fell, and its ruin was great.”¹

No wonder that, when he ended, the multitudes were astonished at such teaching. He had spoken as a law-giver of greater authority than Moses.

¹ Matt. vii. 24-27 (paraphrased).

CHAPTER XIX

CHRIST AND THE SABBATH LAWS

AFTER some months' stay in Galilee, the return of one of the great feasts, we do not know which, attracted Christ once more to Jerusalem. Only one incident of this visit is recorded, but it is very striking.¹

The pools, tanks, fountains, and wells of the Holy City, which are now in a disgraceful state, were then in perfect order, water flowing into the town through various aqueducts, led from the hills beyond Bethlehem, and from other parts. One of the most famous pools was known as "Bethesda"—"the house of mercy," the site of which was on the north side of the road which passes the upper end of the Temple enclosure; two pools, side by side, being known by the one name, the smaller fifty-five feet, the larger, sixty-four feet long, both now uncovered. Twenty-four steps led to the bottom from the eastern side, and, in the time of Our Lord, five porches, still remaining centuries after, afforded shelter to the crowds who came to the waters. These rose high after the winter rains, and were then noted for their colour, caused by the red earth of the soil through which they passed. The flow into the twin pools was, further, intermittent; ceasing for longer or shorter intervals; a peculiarity caused by the siphon-like, or up and down channel through which the water passed underground. It was commonly fancied, in Christ's day, however, that the redness was caused by the blood of a dragon living at the source of the spring, and the

¹ John v. 1-9.

intermission in the flow by the monster drinking up the water while he was awake, and leaving it to run while he slept. Yet not a few believed that the red was the blood of a demon, killed by a good angel, after much commotion; the evil visitant seeking to get into the waters, to hurt those who bathed in them or drank them.

A pool, into which an angel was fancied from time to time to descend, was naturally supposed, in such an age, to have wonderful healing powers, and thus a multitude of sick and diseased thronged round it in hope of being cured, if so fortunate as to reach the water at the moment the angel was imagined to have come down to it. The steps at the side afforded means of descending, but, without help, many sufferers had to wait for months, or even years, in vain hope of being carried down. Among the sufferers lying in the porches till some one would befriend him at the right moment, was a man who had been helpless from rheumatism or paralysis for thirty-eight years. Happily for him, Jesus, in passing, saw his misery, and, having heard his story, healed him by a word; telling him to rise, take up the poor palm or rush-mat on which he lay, and walk. Such a deed might well have won the favour of all, but it had been done on a Sabbath, and to carry the sleeping-mat was contrary to Sabbath law, which forbade carrying anything whatever on the sacred day. Accused of the offence, the poor man innocently justified himself by saying that he had only obeyed him who had cured him. But an offence against the Sabbath bad enough in any one, was especially heinous in a religious teacher! The Rabbis had laid down the law with ridiculous minuteness. As much food might be carried on the Sabbath as the bulk of a dried fig; as much ink as would write two letters of the alphabet; but a needle or a pin left by chance in one's clothes was an unlawful burden, nor could a loaf be carried by one person, though it might be carried between two. Little

dreaming what would follow, the healed man, terrified by the fear of being put out of the synagogue for his offence, at once told them, on meeting his benefactor shortly after in the Temple, and learning his name, that it was Jesus who had told him to carry his mat. How could that be wrong which was ordered by one whom God so honoured as to give him power to work such a miracle?

Our Lord was forthwith required to appear before the Jewish Church court, but its members were little prepared for the defence he offered. His Heavenly Father, he said, had from the beginning disregarded their Sabbath laws, and he, like his Father, was Lord of the Sabbath, and free to do what he chose on it. He thus aggravated his guilt by making himself equal with God.¹ His enemies had already charged him with blasphemy at Capernaum, for saying he could forgive sins: here was a repetition of the offence. Such claims must have thrown the excitable Orientals, his judges, into the wildest frenzy, like that when, a few years later, they gnashed their teeth at the martyr Stephen, shouting aloud and stopping their ears that he might not be further heard.² But Christ remained perfectly calm, and when the tumult subsided, went on with his defence against this second charge. So far from retracting, he reasserted his claim to divine authority still more strongly. God, alone, could raise the dead, but he, as His Son, would not only, now, raise the spiritually dead, but, hereafter, would call forth all the dead from their graves. If the works he did were not accepted by them as a proof that the Father was with him, he appealed to their own Scriptures, which witnessed to him as the Messiah. Let them beware of rejecting him!³

The authorities had never encountered such a prisoner, and would fain have arrested him that he might be put to death by the Romans, after trial by the Sanhedrim,

¹ John v, 2-18,

² Acts vii. 54, 57,

³ John v, 19-47,

but were afraid to proceed against him ; partly, we may believe, from his favour with the people. Yet the shadow of the Cross lay from this time on the path of the Saviour. Spies hung about him wherever he went, even in Galilee, to discover or invent charges against him. Hopeless of doing more good in Jerusalem, and longing for the comparative freedom of his own country, he once more turned his face towards it. In the bracing air of the northern hills men were less gloomy and fanatical than in the Holy City ; had less of its fierce bigotry or malevolent hypocrisy. But there were Rabbis in all parts, and no hatred is so deadly as that kindled by religion.

Under these circumstances fresh charges were soon concocted. During a Sabbath day's walk, within a fortnight, the Rabbis again assailed him. By the path he had taken, doubtless of the legal length of less than three-quarters of a mile, he had led his disciples through ripening patches of barley. It was permitted both by the Law and custom to pluck ears enough from such growing crops to satisfy hunger, or grapes enough from a vine,¹ as Orientals still do in the same circumstances, and they availed themselves of the liberty, plucking some ears and eating the grain, as they went on, after rubbing it out from the husk. This simple act, however, involved two offences against the Rabbinical laws, and eyes were ever on the watch to report any breach of them. To pluck the ears was a kind of reaping, and the rubbing was a kind of grinding or threshing. Besides, all food eaten on the Sabbath must be prepared on the Friday, and the rubbing was a kind of preparation. On any other day what had been done would have been blameless, and to break the Sabbath laws rather than wait till night, when the holy day ended, was an offence worthy of stoning. If such Sabbath desecration were left unpunished, re-

¹ Deut. xxiii. 24, 25 ; (Gleaning), Lev. xix. 9 ; Deut. xxiv. 19-22 ; Ruth ii. 2.

ligion would perish! Had he not broken the Sabbath only a fortnight before, by telling the man whom he had healed in Jerusalem, to take up his sleeping-mat and carry it home?

Challenged at once by some Pharisees, his answer only made matters worse. Had not David when hungry eaten even the holy bread of the Temple, sacred to priests alone?¹ And did not the priests do the same without blame, when on duty in the Temple on the Sabbath? But *he* was greater than the Temple, and it must, much more, be fitting that his disciples should break the rules of the Rabbis to satisfy their natural wants. They had acted under his authority, and, as the Son of Man—that is, the Messiah, he was Lord of the Sabbath. They should ponder what God meant when He said, by the Prophet, that He valued mercy more than sacrifice, and acts of love above outward forms of religion.²

Such language threatened the system which the Rabbis and the nation at large held sacred. It was clear that he was an innovator and a revolutionary! Had he not compared the prevailing observances to an old garment or old skin-bottles; had he not claimed to forgive sins; had he not associated with publicans and sinners; had he not slighted the prescribed washings and fastings; and, now, had he not again given permission to violate the holy Sabbath? But for his wide popularity among the lower classes, by whom the Rabbinical laws were little regarded, he would at once have been arraigned before the Sanhedrim, which could inflict any punishment short of death.

The synagogues were yet free to him and he still frequented them, but it was impossible for his sincere and truthful spirit to avoid collisions with the religion of the day. Another violation of the laws of the Sabbath soon followed, in one of the services. A man in the synagogue with his right hand withered by paralysis,

¹ Matt. xii, 1-8; Mark ii. 23-28; Luke vi. 1-5.

² Hos. vi. 6.

attracted his attention.¹ Scribes and Pharisees, as usual, were on the watch to see if he would in any way offend. Their Sabbath rules about healing were as wire-drawn as other parts of their system. For toothache, vinegar might be used in the mouth, if afterwards swallowed. In a sore throat, oil might be swallowed, but not used as a gargle. To heal any one on the holy day was to work on it, and, thus, was Sabbath desecration. But Jesus never feared to do right. Looking at the paralyzed man, he bade him rise and stand forth. "Is it lawful," said he, to the scowling Rabbis, "to do good on the Sabbath or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?" To such a question they could give no answer. "It is allowable, is it not," he continued, when they refused to speak, "to help a sheep out of a pit on the Sabbath? How much better, then, is a man than a sheep! Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath." "Stretch forth thy hand," said he to the poor man, and immediately it was whole like the other.

Thus he was again at issue with the religious leaders of the people, and it was clearer than ever that he condemned them. Each new offence tended to unite the different parties among his adversaries, which were, otherwise, fiercely against each other. The cry was raised that "the Church was in danger," and all banded together to crush "the deceiver of the people." They would have hailed a Messiah who proposed to set up a great Jewish kingdom, but one seeking only to make men better, and daring to challenge the orthodoxy of the day, was dangerous.

But though thus hated by the Jewish authorities, his popularity with the Law-neglecting multitude continued to increase. As, however, it was important to avoid any open collision with his enemies, he withdrew from Capernaum for a time, on a fresh circuit, till matters quieted down. The towns and villages along the lake were first visited, and crowds gathered wherever he went, for the excitement about

¹ Luke vi. 6-11.

him was spreading far and wide, so that many came from great distances to see and hear him. At some places, indeed, it was found necessary that a boat should attend him, that he might betake himself to it when the throngs grew oppressive. Miraculous cures heightened the general enthusiasm, but even when he healed, a command of secrecy was imposed, to prevent any expression of public feeling in his favour.

It must have been about this time that, on his return home, a deputation of "the elders,"¹ waited on him. They were, as such, "rulers" of the synagogue, and, consequently, Jewish magistrates; but, strange to say, they came on behalf of one not a Jew by birth. Herod Antipas kept a small garrison in Capernaum, and this, at the moment, was under the command of a centurion, who, though a heathen, was kindly disposed, towards Judaism, and had won the hearts of the Hebrew community by building a synagogue for them; possibly that of which the ruins still remain at Tel Hûm. One of his slaves having been struck down by paralysis, and fast sinking, he prayed Jesus through the "elders," with a beautiful tenderness rarely shown to a slave in those ages, to heal the sufferer. It was just the case to rouse the deepest interest in Christ, and he forthwith returned with them. The centurion had not, however, expected a personal visit, and on hearing that Jesus was coming, sent a second message, that he had only ventured to hope for a healing word from him, for that, he felt, would suffice. At last, coming forward himself, he apologised in person—"Lord," said he, "trouble not thyself thus, for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof. Wherefore, neither thought I myself worthy to come to thee, but say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I, also, am a man set under authority (and obey my superiors), and have soldiers under me, and I say to this one, Go, and he

¹ Matt. viii. 5-13; Luke vii. 1-10.

goes; to another, Come, and he comes, and to my slave, Do this, and he does it. (If, therefore, you command the demons who cause disease, they will doubtless at once obey your word and leave my servant, for they are under your authority, as my soldiers or slaves are under mine.)” “Verily,” said Christ, as he heard this, “I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.” Then, cheered by such an earnest of future triumphs, he astonished his Jewish hearers, by adding, that many would come from all parts of the world to the joys of the new Kingdom of God, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in heaven, while the Jew, so confident of getting there as one of the chosen people, would be shut out. “Go thy way,” he continued, addressing the centurion, “and as thou hast believed, so be it done to thee.” And the slave was healed in that very hour.

The next day our Lord was far from Capernaum, having walked over the hills and across the plain of Esdraelon, to the “mountains of Gilboa,” which run into the wide level, leaving, at its eastern end, only a triangle of plain on each side of them. He was making for Nain—“the beautiful,”—then a good-sized village on the northern slope of Gilboa, a little above the valley, but now a miserable hamlet, inhabited by a few poor and fanatical Moslems. The track from the plain climbs the slope to the west of the village, from which another path runs westward to a small cemetery among the rocks. As he reached this, the funeral of the only son of a widow was passing to the grave; all the men of the village following. Funerals to-day are, no doubt, much the same as they were long ago. A flag or two, if they can be had, are borne aloft, women veiled in white—real or hired mourners—fill the air with lamentations, and behind the bier comes a crowd of men and boys, generally without any pretence of seriousness, but simply to honour a custom. A poor woman left to mourn alone in her desolated home, over an only son who had been alive a very few hours

before, touched the heart of Our Lord. It was not meet that death should triumph in his presence. Stepping towards the mother, he told her not to weep, and then, having stopped the bier, he went to it, regardless of the defilement of a corpse, which would have made a Rabbi keep as far as he could from it, he laid his hand on the open frame on which the dead lay. "Young man," said he, "I say unto thee, arise." It was enough. "He that was dead sat up and began to speak, and he delivered him to his mother." The report of such a miracle, recalling the wonders told of Elijah and Elisha in this very district, flew far and wide, to Judea on the south, and even to the remote Perea beyond Jordan.¹

It was about this time that Jesus, noticing, it may be, some Rabbis or Pharisees watching him, and feeling bitterly the opposition he met from them, broke out in stern denunciation of their obdurate blindness of heart.² "To what," cried he, "shall I liken the men of this generation? They are like children in the open market-place, playing at marriages and funerals; pretending to make music and dance for the one, and to act as mourners for the other, but not regarded by their companions. John the Baptist came upholding the Law, for he fasted and commanded his disciples to obey the Rabbis. But you thought him too strict, and because he condemned your sins, you said he had a devil. I came, eating and drinking like other men, neither ordering men to fast, nor insisting on all the laws about food which prevail, and you call me a glutton and a winebibber, and a friend of the publicans and sinners whom you abhor. But the truly wise think both John and myself right; him, as the last prophet of the Law of Moses; me, as the founder of the new Kingdom of God." Christ had done many miracles in Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, and their refusal to admit even such proofs of his being the Messiah, roused his indignation.

¹ Luke vii. 11-17.

² Matt. xi. 16-30; Luke vii. 29-35.

"Tyre and Sidon would have repented long ago," said he, "had such mighty works been done in them; but these cities, destroyed by God's wrath for their sins, would fare better in the day of judgment than those which had rejected him."

Yet, though proud bigots were fierce against him, he



MALE DANCERS. (COLONEL CONDER, R.E.)

found a simpler and truer spirit among the humbler classes. He could cheer himself by the thought that while the self-righteous slighted him and his message, his Heavenly Father had revealed the truth to the babe-like common people. The religious world affected to scorn him as unworthy of notice, but the poor and despised accepted him. It was natural, therefore, that he should turn to the humbler multitude, whom the

"better" classes despised and hated, and address them in the memorable words, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden (with the rites and traditions of men, which give no peace of heart from their observance), and I will give you rest. (Cast off their heavy yoke), and take on you mine, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart (not haughty like the Rabbis), and you shall find rest for your souls. For the yoke I lay on you is easy, and my burden is light, (for it is the law of love)."

CHAPTER XX

THE VARIOUS OCCURRENCES OF THE TALE

The chapter is divided into three parts, each of which is a story. The first story is about a man who was very poor and had no money. He was very kind and had many friends. One day he was very sick and his friends were very sad. They all tried to help him, but they could not. Finally, he died. The second story is about a man who was very rich and had many friends. He was very kind and had many friends. One day he was very sick and his friends were very sad. They all tried to help him, but they could not. Finally, he died. The third story is about a man who was very poor and had no money. He was very kind and had many friends. One day he was very sick and his friends were very sad. They all tried to help him, but they could not. Finally, he died.

All the people who were in the house were very sad. They all tried to help him, but they could not. Finally, he died. The second story is about a man who was very rich and had many friends. He was very kind and had many friends. One day he was very sick and his friends were very sad. They all tried to help him, but they could not. Finally, he died. The third story is about a man who was very poor and had no money. He was very kind and had many friends. One day he was very sick and his friends were very sad. They all tried to help him, but they could not. Finally, he died.

followed, on the guest taking his place on the couch, by a servant coming behind with a laver and basin, and pouring water over the feet, to cool them and wash off the dust, and then wiping them dry with a soft towel. The head and beard were next oiled, as a sign of glad welcome, and water was finally brought, once more, to wash the hands, which was very important when the fingers were to be put into the dish. Not to wash the hands thus, was, indeed, so flagrant a breach of the ceremonial laws that it is reported of one great Rabbi that when in prison, with only enough water to satisfy the pangs of extreme thirst, he preferred to use it for washing his hands rather than for drinking. None of these usual expressions of kindness and respect had been shown by Simon to Jesus, but there was one, near at hand, who presently made up for the omission. Houses are always open in the East, and any one walks in or out at pleasure. Silently gliding into the chamber, though it was contrary to custom for one of her sex to come to a gathering of men, there now passed a woman. In a small town where every one was known, Simon recognised her as a doubtful character, and was no doubt greatly shocked at her presence. What could be her object? Her actions soon explained it. Kneeling down outside the couch on which Jesus was resting, she began to anoint his feet with fragrant ointment, but, as she did so, her tears fell so fast on them that she was fain to wipe them with her hair, which had escaped its fastenings. She was in sore trouble of mind. His words had sunk into her heart, but, while humbling her for the sins of her past life, he had kindled hope in her breast by his gracious invitation to all who were weary and heavy laden to come to him for rest. Weeping, and wiping his feet with her hair, and meekly kissing them, she gave free vent to her mingled sorrow and gratitude. Nor did Jesus disturb her. He knew her motive, and left her to herself.

The Pharisee was horrified. That a Rabbi should let such a woman, or, indeed, any woman, approach

him, and perform such offices, was most improper. He did not speak, but his thoughts showed themselves in his looks. This man, said he to himself, if he really were a prophet,—that is, a proper religious teacher—would have known what kind of woman she is who touches him, for she is a sinner. But Jesus, noticing all, had a ready and decisive defence. Turning to Simon, he put this question, “A certain creditor had two debtors: one who owed him five hundred pence; another who owed him fifty, but when he found they had nothing with which to pay him, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, which of them would love him most?” “I suppose,” said the Pharisee, “the one to whom most was forgiven.” “You have judged rightly,” replied Jesus. “When I entered your house, you gave me no water for my feet; but this woman has washed them with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head. You did not anoint my head with oil; but she has anointed my feet with precious ointment. I say unto you, therefore, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she has loved much: but one to whom little is forgiven, loves little. Then, addressing the woman, he told her, “Your sins are forgiven. Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”¹ That he should claim power to forgive sins had already been charged against him as blasphemy, and this repetition of the offence was, no doubt, treasured up against him.

During these months Our Lord seems to have journeyed through Galilee² preaching, followed by the Twelve, and also by some female disciples of good social position, who assisted in supplying the wants of their Master and the apostles. Of these earliest mothers of the Church the names of five have been preserved—Mary Magdalene, Joanna the wife of Chuza, a high official of Herod Antipas, Mary the mother of James the Younger and Joses, Salome, of whom only the name is known, and Salome, the mother of James and John,

¹ Luke vii. 36–50.

² Luke viii. 1–3.

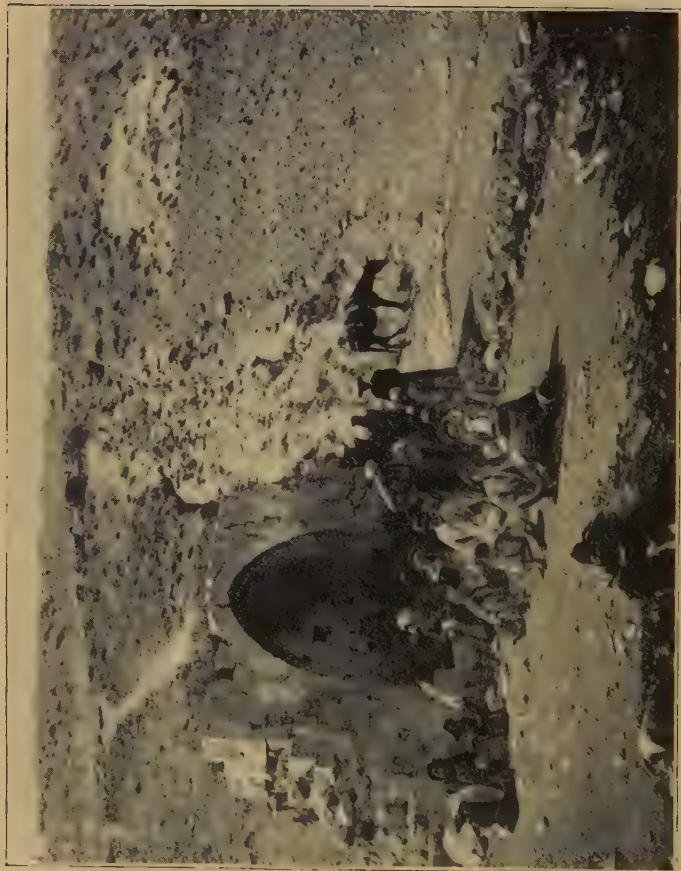
and wife of Zebedee. It was new to have members of their sex following a religious teacher, and showed that he had introduced a nobler feeling toward woman, raising her from inferiority to the dignity and respect she has ever since held in Christian nations.

We can only imperfectly fill up the daily life of Our Lord on these journeys. From many notices in the Gospels, however, we see that in bearing and dress he was very different from the Rabbis. The large "phylacteries" and huge tassels at the corners of their tallith or scarf, which were their pride, found no favour with him, and in contrast to their terror at coming near the common people, he freely mixed with the humblest in the streets and in their homes. As "the friend of sinners," he thus treated the legal rules of defilement with indifference. He was pleased with the amenities of life. He did not decline the anointing of his head or beard, or the washing of his feet at each resting-place,¹ and his daily food was not that of a hermit, like John the Baptist, for we find him permitting the use of wine, bread and honey, fish, flesh, and fowl.² Yet there was no extravagance, for he enjoined on his disciples the strictest moderation, both in dress and living; setting them in all things an example.³ In his familiar intercourse with the Twelve there was no reserve. They saw him in every light; but this close and constant knowledge tended day by day to an increasing reverence and love, for we find them afterwards speaking of their intercourse with him as a hallowed memory, which grew more sacred with the lapse of years. His condescension, the endearments of his tender friendship, the peace and calm of his spirit, remembered in connection with his almighty power, filled their hearts with loving adoration, which made it their one supreme longing, after he had left them, that he might speedily return, or that they should depart to be for ever with him.

¹ Matt. vi. 16; xxvi. 6; Luke vii. 44.

² Matt. xi. 19; vii. 10; x. 29; xiv. 17; Luke xxiv. 42; John xxi. 13.

³ Matt. xi. 8; viii. 20; x. 9; Phil. iv. 12.



WAYSIDE WELL, ON THE OLD JERICO ROAD

He always travelled on foot, and doubtless often felt grateful for a cup of cold water as he toiled over the bare sun-scorched chalk hills of Galilee or Judea. When he found a temporary home, he blessed it on entering, with the words: "Peace be to this house," and did not trouble himself, like the Rabbis, with any scruples about the legal "cleanness" of tables, benches, or vessels. If



THE GIFT OF A CUP OF COLD WATER.

he met inhospitality, he quietly went on to another village, except in special cases, when even his gentle spirit was roused, and then his protest was confined to shaking the very dust of the place from his feet.¹

The summer passed in continuous labour throughout wide districts. Wherever he appeared, crowds gathered, anxious to see and hear him. The sick came or were

¹ Matt. x, 11-14.

brought, that he might heal them. From morning to night, day after day, there was an unbroken strain on his whole nature; excited throngs pressing even into the retirement of the house in which he might be resting, and hardly leaving time or free space for meals. All this must have been very wearying, for he had not only to bear the sight of every form of misery, but to endure the exhaustion of his nervous and physical strength by constant labour and excitement. Still more, he was borne down by the want of sympathy, for though all were willing to hear him, few went farther.

Meanwhile, even the success he enjoyed made the authorities daily more bitter. Their power and pocket were both in danger, for he assailed their teaching and even their personal shortcomings; thus, in their opinion, attacking religion itself, of which they were the public representatives. While he had only a few disciples they could afford to neglect him, but he constantly gave fresh grounds of provocation. Twelve apostles had been chosen; the people thronged to hear him; and if not stopped, he might create a great party.

That he performed wonderful miracles could not be denied, but they might be ascribed to unholy aid from Satan, and thus be made to tell against rather than for him. He had healed at Capernaum a man blind, dumb, and possessed by a devil, and a cure so astounding naturally led many to ask whether he must not be the Messiah. 'No,' said the Rabbis, 'he is in league with the devil.' After the miracle, he had returned to Peter's house wearied and faint, but an excited crowd followed him even into the room where he was, so that he could not get a moment's rest for necessary food. Among others, some Scribes had entered, for no good end, but Jesus read their scowling faces, and knew how they spoke of him, and he determined to rebuke them publicly.¹

¹ Matt. xii. 22-37; Mark iii. 22-30; Luke xi. 14, 15, 17-23.

"Every one knows," said he, "that if a kingdom be divided against itself it cannot stand. Now I seek the destruction of the kingdom of Satan, and how can it be he who gives me power to work his own ruin? You say that you cast out spirits; by whose power do you pretend to do so? You use magic spells and all the rules of the black art, and that looks, indeed, like invoking Beelzebub. But if I cast them out by the power of God, He must be near! A devil can only be driven away by one stronger than himself, and therefore I must be greater than the power of Evil. Think what a sin you commit in speaking so! It is the Spirit of God that works through me, and you blaspheme Him by your language, for you have shut your eyes against the light. But to blaspheme the Spirit of God is a sin which cannot be forgiven, since it is He alone who gives spiritual life. The soul guilty of this has chosen darkness as its portion. Beware, therefore. If my acts be like good fruit from a good tree, call them so, but do not call a tree bad if its fruits be good." Growing more indignant as he went on, he denounced them as a generation of vipers! Their blasphemy was natural to them, for a good heart spoke worthy words, but only a bad heart such words as theirs! By their words they would be judged at last!

At this point some Scribes and Pharisees, while asserting that he was helped by the devil, asked a sign from heaven in support of his claim to be the Messiah. His miracles, it would seem, were not enough. It was expected that the Messiah would do something on a great scale; perhaps throw down the walls of Jerusalem by a word, or divide the Jordan and make a dry pathway through it for his followers. Men so blind to the signs of God's presence with Christ, and unmoved by his gracious words, were the worst enemies of the truth, and as such he turned from them with saddened heart. The only sign he would give, said he, would be his own death and resurrection, which he compared to the wonders related of Jonah. His words and deeds were

"signs" so marked and all-sufficient, that the heathen of Nineveh, who repented at the preaching of Jonah, would, hereafter, rise in judgment against those round him for their unbelief. The Queen of Sheba would condemn them, for she came from afar to listen to Solomon, while they slighted him, though greater than their famous king. They had, indeed, both under the ministry of John, and under his own, in large numbers professed penitence and promised reform, but it had all passed away, as when a soul, left for a time by an evil spirit, was entered, ere long, by seven still worse.¹

He had silenced the Rabbis, and, in doing so, had deepened their hatred. But worse awaited him. His enemies had hinted that his brain was affected, and this insinuation had reached his family at Nazareth. Very possibly its members, regarding the Rabbis with superstitious reverence, accepted their hideous suggestion that he was possessed by a devil. Like their countrymen they could not think of him as the Messiah, so long as he remained only a teacher and did not become a political leader. Capernaum was only about seven hours' distance from Nazareth, over the plains of Battauf. They would go and see him for themselves; and so, Mary and the brothers and sisters of Jesus—Joseph being dead—set out for Peter's house.²

They arrived at the very time when Our Lord was still surrounded by the crowd who had seen the cure of the blind, dumb, and possessed man, and when the Rabbis had been silenced by him. He was worn out with the toil and excitement of the last months, and needed rest, but his relatives, instead of looking at matters thus, fancied his mind affected by religious enthusiasm, and resolved to take him home by force,³ if necessary, and keep him for a time under restraint. What this meant we know from the chains and fetters with which the possessed man in "the country of the Gadarenes" was loaded.

¹ Matt. xii. 38-45.

² Mark vi. 3, 4.

³ Mark iii. 21.



A GATHERING OF ORIENTALS.

As it happened, when his mother and those with her arrived, they could not get to him for the crowd, and had to pass him word of their presence and wish to speak with him. But even the tenderest relationship could not be considered while his whole soul was engrossed with the interests of the Kingdom of God which he was proclaiming and defending. "Who is my mother?" asked he, "and who are my brethren?" Then, stretching his hands towards those around him, "Behold," said he, "my mother and my brethren, for whosoever shall do the will of my Father in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."¹

Foiled in their effort to brand Our Lord as in league with the devil, the Pharisees resolved to entrap him by pretending friendliness. One of them, therefore, asked him to join the light morning meal, then lately introduced into Palestine by the Romans; and though he knew the insincerity of the compliment, he at once complied. It was thought, perhaps, that he might be drawn out to his hurt, but the miscalculation was soon evident. Washing the hands before eating was, as we have seen, a matter of first importance to a Pharisee. "It is better," said one Rabbi, "to die of thirst than to break the commandment, and thus die eternally." Moreover, Christ had just come from a crowd, and this in itself 'defiled' him. Yet he quietly took his place without attending to either of these legal requirements. The host and his guests, much shocked, soon showed it, but he turned on them, knowing they were already his deadly enemies, and rebuked their attention to mere forms while disregarding matters much more weighty. "They cleaned the outside of the cup and platter," said he, "but were full of greed and wickedness within, while God requires purity in the heart, not worthless rites. They tithed small herbs, such as mint and rue, and were indifferent to uprightness and the love of God. Their whole life was mere acting.

¹ Matt. xii. 46-50; Mark iii. 31-35; Luke viii. 19-21.

They loved the chief seats in the synagogues, and salutations in the crowded market-places: in short, they were like hidden graves, which defile one when he least expects it.”¹

Such an attack on the religionists of the day was not easily borne. A “lawyer” or Scribe present, resented it on the moment as a charge against his order as such. This interruption, however, only turned Christ against the “lawyers” especially. They loaded men, said he, with a burden of forms and rites which the toiling masses could not possibly observe, and then denounced them as under the curse of God for not doing this impossibility. They affected great zeal for every jot and tittle of the Law, and built sepulchres to the prophets, while as bad as their fathers who martyred them, for they would ere long treat as shamefully, the prophets he would send among them—his apostles. Their hypocrisy would, however, bring down on them the vengeance of God for the blood of all the prophets slain from the beginning! They pretended to teach the people, but they misled them; they neither entered the Kingdom of God themselves nor would they let others enter.²

The die was finally cast. From this time Jesus was fully aware that he was doomed. A scene of wild excitement followed.³ Pressing vehemently round him, the infuriated guests baited him with questions likely to give them a chance of catching at his answers, and it seemed as if they would even attack him. His great popularity with the multitude, for the moment, however, protected him.

About this time, one of the crowd, thinking, perhaps, that, like other Rabbis, he would give an opinion on a question of civil law, asked if he would “speak to his brother, to divide the inheritance with him.” But he showed at once that the applicant had misconceived his character. In the fewest words he let it be known

¹ Luke xi. 37-44.

² Luke xi. 45-52.

³ Luke xi. 53-54.

that he would not interfere in mere worldly matters. They were not his province.

This incident, however, gave a text on which to deliver an earnest warning against selfish greed and worldliness, and we are indebted to it, besides, for the striking parable of the rich man, whose heart was set on his teeming harvests, and who, unmindful of the uncertainty of life, resolved to build great barns in which to store them. His many years of enjoyment were, alas! only a dream, for that very night his soul was required of him! It is thus, said Our Lord, with him who heaps up treasures for himself, and is not rich towards God. Death strips him of all, and that, often when he least expects it.¹

¹ Luke xii. 13-21.

CHAPTER XXI

MINGLED LIGHT AND CLOUDS

THE meal in the house of the Pharisee marks the first violent outbreak of Christ's enemies. As he left, the Rabbis followed him, with fierce words and angry gesticulations, till a great crowd had gathered, some for, others against him. He could no longer be silent. What would he say? Pressing through the multitude, and stepping into a boat floating close to the land, he delivered the first of a wondrous succession of parables; henceforth using this form of picture-lesson as his usual mode of address. As he sat in the boat the fertile slopes behind would show the sower going forth from his cabin, to sow his patch on the open hill-side, with its varied soil; here crossed by a path, there, full of the seeds and roots of thorns and weeds, or boasting only a thin layer of soil over the rock, or, perhaps, offering a stretch of rich and deep earth. From this he preached his sermon. The seed was good, and the Sower did his work faithfully; but the result depended not only on what was sown, or on the rain, and light and heat, which came equally on all the hill-side, but also on the soil itself. Part fell on the path, now hard, but once as soft as the best, and was crushed under foot by the feet of men and beasts, or picked off by the birds. Some fell on spots where thistles had already taken root, and would soon outgrow it; some on the shallow skin of earth over the rock, which hindered the grain from striking down, and supplied no moisture to feed it, and only a part fell on

good soil and yielded a return for the sower's toil.¹ So was it with the sowing of the Word of God!

As the Parable of the Sower describes the earliest stage of a religious life, other parables treat of its growth in the individual and the world. It was like the silent growth of seed, said Christ, which springs up successively into the blade, the ear, and the ripened corn.² Or it was like a grain of mustard seed, which, though at first a mere speck—the smallest of seeds usually sown—grows to a bush from eight to twelve feet high,³ in which the birds of the air lodge; or it was like a spot of yeast put into flour and silently leavening the whole. As the seed ripens into corn, or the mustard grows to a tree, or the yeast spreads through the meal, the new Kingdom of God would triumph in the individual, and finally over the earth. They looked for it to be spread by force; it was to extend only by conviction and love.

That there should be hindrances was natural, and these he illustrated by comparing them to tares, or rather darnel, sown in a man's field by his enemy, and not to be known from the grain till both had come to fruit. For the sake of the wheat both were left till the harvest time, and then, when the weed had flowered, it would be picked out from the wheat before reaping, and gathered in bundles for burning, while the wheat would be carried, when thus separated, into the barn: a custom one may still see in Palestine. Many would pass themselves off as Christians who were not really so, but they would be separated in the end. He further compared his kingdom to a net cast into the lake, and enclosing good fish and bad. When full, it is drawn to shore, and the good gathered into vessels, while the bad are cast away.

The supreme worth of sincere godliness was taught in different parables. It was like a treasure hidden in a field, to gain which the finder bought the field at the cost of all he had. Or it was like a costly pearl for which a travelling merchant parted with everything.

¹ Matt. xiii. 1-23; Mark iv. 1-25; Luke viii. 4-18.

² Mark iv. 26-29.

³ Riehlm. art "Senf."

These and the other parables now strung together¹ in the Gospels may not have been spoken at one time, but it is easy to imagine that, with our Lord's wealth of illustration, they might have been so, had he pleased. His mind overflowed with such vivid pictures, so that it was no labour to him to pour them forth in ever fresh variety.

But evening came at last, and found him wearied with the toil and excitement of the day. Capernaum, however, could no longer be the quiet home it had been. The slanders of the Rabbis turned many against him, so that he was fain to seek peace by another circuit through the land. Besides, his apostles needed the wider experience such journeys brought. The lonely tableland on the other side of the lake, stretching far to the east of the Jordan—a region more heathen than Jewish—offered a safe retreat. Instead of returning to Peter's house, therefore, he ordered his disciples to row him to the opposite shore, where he might have rest, and be beyond his enemies. But the incidents of the day were not yet over. A crowd had followed him to the beach and were watching his departure, when one of them, a Rabbi, asked leave to follow him as a disciple, expressing his willingness to attend him wherever he went.² To have a Rabbi in his train might have seemed very desirable, but Our Lord admitted to his company only those whose sincerity was beyond question, whatever their position. He returned, therefore, an answer which would test the applicant's motives. "The foxes," said he, "have holes, and the birds of the air nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." Driven from Capernaum, he was homeless, and wished him to know this. To a second applicant who asked leave to bury his father, before joining the disciples, a startling answer was given. Thirty days' mourning for the dead were involved in the delay. Under other circumstances Christ would

¹ Matt. xiii. 31-50,

² Matt. viii. 18-22 ; Luke ix. 57-62.

have commended such filial piety, but it was now to be taught by a supreme example that when decision for God was involved, even the most sacred natural feelings must be made subordinate. "Let the (spiritually) dead bury their dead," said he, "but go thou and preach the Kingdom of God." In making this demand, so strange to us, Jesus was only copying a rule laid down by the Rabbis. Their disciples were required constantly to act thus, and no less could be asked in the service of the New Kingdom of God. A third who sought leave to bid his family circle farewell before following Christ, received an answer very similar. "No one having put his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God:" he must have an undivided heart, distracted by no earthly regrets.

While being rowed over the lake, the weariness of a long day soon brought deep sleep, though the rough planks of the fishing-boat were Our Lord's only couch. My own dragoman laid himself thus in the bottom of the boat in which I sailed over the same waters, and presently fell into a similar heavy slumber. A sudden storm, however, such as is common on the lake, presently swept down from the hills, and at once roughened the water so that the boat was nearly swamped. It was such a storm, it may be, as I saw drive over the lake, with fierce wind and lashing rain, lasting only a short time, but a hurricane while it continued. Amidst the wild uproar of the elements, even bronzed fisher-folk like the Twelve, blinded by the rain, unable to row for the wind, and like to founder, lost their presence of mind. Jesus, however, lay still asleep; so utterly had he been exhausted. At last, in their alarm, they ventured to rouse him, and appealed to his pity to save them. Rising, with calm self-possession, which was itself a rebuke, he gently chided their fears, and then addressing the wind and the sea, as if they had been living powers, commanded them to be still. Nor did they for a moment fail to own his authority, for a great calm spread forthwith around.

"What manner of man is this?" muttered the apostles, "for he commands even the winds and the waves, and they obey him."¹

The boat had meanwhile reached the other side of the lake, near the half-heathen city of Gadara, or Gerasa, now represented by the hamlet of Khersa, which lay on the tableland, and was reached by a path up a steep gorge, in cliffs here and there hollowed out into tombs, perhaps even then ancient. In one of these, two furious madmen, whom no chains could bind, had made their abode, to the terror of passers-by. Both presently rushed out towards Jesus with wild cries, imploring him not to trouble them, for they were not only insane, but possessed by devils. One, especially, ran and fell down before him. "What is thy name?" said Christ, addressing not the man but the spirit which enslaved him. "Our name is Legion, for we are many," was the terrible reply. Forthwith came the command to leave their unfortunate victim, but, true to their nature, they were fain to do some harm, even in departing. On the open ground near, a great herd of swine, the abomination of the Jew, were feeding—owned by some one who supplied the heathen market of Gerasa with such food, and with swine to sacrifice. "Send us into them," cried the devils, "and do not drive us into the abyss;" a request followed, when granted, by the whole herd rushing violently down the cliff into the lake, where they were drowned. As Lord of all, Jesus was free to act as he chose, for all things are his by the supreme right of creation. Such awful power, following the amazing calm wrought on the lake by a word, must have been a further step in training the apostles to trust their Master, and to feel that whatever he might say came with an authority that could carry it into effect.²

He would have liked to stay in this new district, but the terror and ill-will excited by the cure of the

¹ Matt. viii. 23-27; Mark iv. 36-41; Luke viii. 22-25.

² Matt. viii. 28 ff.; Mark v. 1 ff.; Luke viii. 26 ff.

maniac and the destruction of the swine had raised so great an excitement that he was forced to return to Capernaum.¹ He had scarcely landed again at his own town, when a demand which he could not resist was made on his sympathy. The only daughter of Jairus, one of the rulers of the synagogue, a girl of twelve, lay at the point of death. This sore trouble had so moved her father, that notwithstanding all said against Christ by the Rabbis, he made his way to him, and falling at his feet, as inferiors in the East do before those much above them, besought him to come and lay his hand on the child and restore her to health. A heart like that of Jesus could not resist such an appeal, and he forthwith set out for the ruler's house. Before arriving there, however, a message came that the sufferer was dead. But they little knew who was on his way to help them. "Be not afraid," said he to Jairus, "only believe." The death chamber, when he arrived, was already full of neighbours, friends, wailing-women, and players on dirge-flutes, making great lamentation. Putting all out but the father and mother of the child, he went in with Peter, James, and John, who were to witness his triumph over the king of terrors. Taking the dead one by the hand, and using words of his people—*Talitha cumi*—Damsel, arise—the spirit returned to the pale form, and she rose and walked. It was a sign, however, of his position, that he enjoined silence as to the miracle, lest his enemies might be still more excited against him.

A touching incident had happened on the way. A woman troubled for many years with an internal ailment which no physician could relieve, came behind him in the crowd, and ventured to touch the tassel of his tallith. Slight as was this contact, it sufficed to heal her, but he felt what had been done, and, turning, asked who had touched him. No longer able to hide her act, and alarmed lest she might be punished by the renewal of her trouble, she fell down before him and

¹ Matt. ix. 1.

told him all the truth. It was enough. "Daughter," said he, "thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague."¹

The excitement caused by such miracles soon attracted, from far and near, as many needing help as found the means of reaching Christ's presence. On the way from the house of Jairus two blind men followed him to Peter's house, appealing to him to restore their sight, and this he did by a touch of their eyes, in return for the faith shown in his power. Another miracle recorded of those days was the casting out a devil from one who was dumb, so that the sufferer henceforth spoke freely. But no proofs of his divine gifts could silence the bitterness of his enemies. "He casts out devils by the help of the prince of devils," was still their explanation of what was happening. That he recognised and healed classes on whom they looked as under the curse of God, and from whom they stood aloof for fear of defilement, seemed a reflection on their own teaching and conduct.²

The Twelve had not yet gone out on any independent mission, but they were rapidly gathering experience which would fit them to be thus trusted. They had still, however, something to learn, which each day's experience was supplying. Jesus had never visited Nazareth since his leaving it, and yearned to remove from his mother and her circle the impressions received from the calumnies of his enemies. It was a grave matter to go there, but in company with his disciples he set out, and was soon under his mother's roof.³

When Sabbath came he had the joy of attending morning worship in the synagogue, while she sat behind the lattice in the woman's gallery. After the reading of the Law, he stood up in silent offer to read the lesson of the day from the Prophets, and was forthwith called to the desk to do so. It was taken from Isaiah, and exactly painted his own office and character. "The

¹ Matt. ix. 18-26; Mark v. 22-43; Luke viii. 41-56.

² Matt. ix. 27-34.

³ Mark vi. 2.

Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God.”¹ Then, sitting down, he began, as was the custom, an explanation of the passage, applying the predictions of the prophet to himself. But, that one whom the hearers had known from his childhood should advance such lofty claims for himself, seemed sheer blasphemy. “Is not this the carpenter?”² whispered one to another, “The son of Mary and Joseph, the brother of James, and Joses, and Jude, and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?” They could not believe that he was the fulfilment of Isaiah’s prophecies. Besides, he spoke on his own authority, without having been trained in the schools, or ordained by the Rabbis, and was declared by them to be inspired by the devil.

As the murmuring rose louder and louder, Jesus at last turned against his assailants, and told them that, if they wanted him to prove his claims by such miracles as he had wrought elsewhere, he would not work them, since they were so prejudiced. He would rather act like Elijah, who withdrew from Israel when it rejected him, and went to the heathen widow of Sarepta, or like Elisha, who healed only Naaman the Syrian, though there were many lepers of his own race in the land. Their hardness of heart would drive him forth to such as would receive him, be they whom they might. They could stand no more. Furious at the mention of the heathen being in any case preferred to their own nation, the whole congregation rose in wild clamour, and drove him towards one of the many steep walls of rock round the town, to cast him down headlong.³ But his time was not yet come. Passing through the fierce mob, he left the town unhurt—never to return to it.

¹ Isa. lxi. 1, R.V.

² Luke iv. 22; Mark vi. 3; Matt. xiv. 55.

³ Luke iv. 23–29.

The apostles were now to be raised from mere followers of Our Lord to be workers with him. The people sorely needed to hear the good news he brought. The whole country rang with the story of a massacre of Galileans, while sacrificing in the Temple: Pilate having let loose his soldiery on them, to quell a tumult they had raised. He had also shocked the national bigotry by taking some of the money lying useless in the Temple, towards building a great aqueduct, much needed for the water supply of Jerusalem. That money given to the Church should be used for even such a purpose was held to be sacrilege, though it was hoarded, we may well believe, to raise a revolt against the Romans!

A cry to avenge the murdered pilgrims was heard on every side, but had no countenance from Our Lord. His countrymen saw in everything signs from heaven in their own favour, but he read matters very differently. Israel, he said, was like a barren fig-tree, which might be spared another year, to see if any pains would make it fruitful,¹ but, these failing, it would be cut down as merely cumbering the ground. To save it, if possible, he would now send forth the Twelve.

Calling them together, therefore, he gave them instructions and invested them with miraculous powers, by which to confirm what they might say. They were for the present to confine themselves to the Jews, avoiding Samaria, and heathen districts; in fact, taking Galilee for their field of labour. Jewish prejudices hindered them, as yet, from the wider missions they were to undertake hereafter.² Their journeys were to cost nothing beyond the food and shelter which hospitality might offer: in this respect copying the good example of the Rabbis. They were to take no money whatever in their girdles, the common Eastern purse, nor a wallet for their food by the way, though Jews everywhere were known by their carrying one, nor

¹ Luke xiii. 1-9.

² Matt. x. 1-11; Mark vi. 7-13; Luke ix. 1-6.

were they to have anything but the sandals of the common people on their feet, and they were to have only one staff. Perfect simplicity was thus enforced, but on one point it made light of the ideas of the time, for the want of a bag exposed them to the danger of eating "unclean" food. Two were to go together, to cheer and sustain each other; but they were not to indulge in the tedious salutations usual at meeting or parting. Time was too precious for mere forms, especially when they were hollow and insincere, like the ordinary profuse and wearisome greetings and adieus. If any house received them, they were to invoke on it heavenly peace; but if a house or city refused to give them entrance, they were to leave it, shaking off its dust from their feet as they did so.

To these general rules and counsels a series of warnings were added, which might well have dismayed men less in earnest. Instead of any prospect of honour or reward, they were to look only for hatred and persecution: jails, whipping, and even death being set before them as their doom, with no other consolation than the assurance that if they were faithful to the last, their souls would be saved hereafter. They would be like sheep in the midst of wolves. They might expect the worst, for they could not hope to fare better than their Master; yet Providence would watch over them.

How long this first mission lasted, or what parts were visited, is not told, but its success was cheering, as they appeared, two by two, in the villages of Galilee. Jesus became the topic of the hour, his name penetrating even into the palace of Herod Antipas in Tiberias.¹ He had now been about two years before the world, and he was steadily rising in popular favour, in spite of the Church authorities. The report of his miracles alarmed the guilty tetrarch, for he could not get out of his thoughts the murder of John the Baptist,

¹ Matt. xi. 1; xiv. 1, 2; Mark vi. 14-16; Luke ix. 7-9.

of which he was guilty. Could it be he, come back from the dead? The very thought made him tremble in his gilded halls. Others wondered if he could be Elijah, whom many expected to appear before the coming of the Messiah; or was he Jeremiah, the patron saint of the nation, or some other of the ancient prophets?

Christ and the apostles met once more in the neighbourhood of Capernaum or, perhaps, of Tiberias,¹ after their temporary separation. He himself had been away, as well as his missionaries, and his reappearance was the signal for fresh excitement. Every village poured out its humble throng, to hear him, so that he had not leisure even to eat,² and could not obtain the quiet he so much needed. It was not safe, moreover, to remain longer in the territory of Antipas, and he therefore crossed over to that of Philip, beyond the broad swamps, the delight of the black buffalo of the district, through which the Jordan enters the lake. On the farther side of these the country rises and falls, to the north-east, into green slopes and pleasant valleys running up, in those days, to the town of Bethsaida Julias. From Capernaum the spot looks like a green bay rising gently from the lake; the tableland which skirts the east side of the waters forming its southern slope. Was it possible to find a retreat here? He would not be seen from the other side, might he not get away thus from the crowds? But his boat had been watched as it crossed. The point to which he was making was six miles by water, but boats were not to be had. Rather than lose him, therefore, the people set off on foot, crossing above the marshes, and reaching Christ from the north-west. As it was near the Passover,³ a large number of the eager multitude were on their way to Jerusalem, while the peasants of all the villages round brought with them their sick that they might be healed. Nor were they disappointed, for as they

¹ Mark vi. 30.

² Mark vi. 31.

³ John vi. 4.

came near, he healed these unfortunates by a word or touch. There were greater wants, however, than those of the body, and he could not refuse ministering also to these. Ascending the slope and gathering all before him, he "spake to them of the Kingdom of God, and taught them many things." Meanwhile evening approached, and they would soon need to return home. Food could not be had in that lonely place, and how could they get back without it, for many had come far? Feeling this, the apostles urged Our Lord to dismiss them, but instead of doing so, he ordered that they first be all fed.¹ Thirty or forty pounds' worth of bread would, however, only give a morsel to each, and the apostles had only five small cakes of barley bread and two small fishes. But these were abundance, with Christ at hand. "Make them sit down," said he. It was spring, and the slopes were rich with young grass—that simplest and most touching lesson of the care of God for all nature—and on this as a royal tapestry, the multitudinous guests were soon arranged, in companies of fifties and hundreds, reminding St. Peter, long after, from the bright colour of their Eastern dresses, of the flower-beds of a great garden.

This done, Jesus took the loaves of the apostles and the fishes, and having first thanked the Eternal Father for them, broke off portions to the Twelve, to hand to the crowds. But to their unspeakable wonder, in dividing these, they so multiplied, as not only to satisfy the hunger of five thousand men, besides women and children,² but to leave enough, after all had eaten, to fill twelve of the little food baskets or wallets which Jews always carried with them. More was left than there had been at first! The effect of such a miracle was in keeping with the spirit of the times. Murmurs ran through the crowds that Jesus must be the Messiah, and, as such, they were ready to put him at their head, there and then, and march under his wonder-working

¹ Matt. xiv. 15-21 ; Mark vi. 35-44 ; Luke ix. 12-17 ; John vi. 5-14.

² Matt. xiv. 21.

leadership against the hated Romans. But such dreams had no charm for Our Lord, and he therefore hurriedly left them, retiring into the hills beyond their reach, after sending off the Twelve, to return to the other side of the lake by boat.¹

Not liking, however, to leave without him, they waited for him till night, and only rowed off then, in the belief that he must have gone round by the head of the lake. When but part of the way across, however, a sudden squall burst on them; perhaps like one I myself saw from the heights over Tiberias. It was the last watch of the night—between three and six in the wild morning, and there was still a third of the distance to row. Jesus had stilled such a storm before, but he was not with them now, and they were worn out. Suddenly, however, close to the boat, they saw, through the gleam of the water and the broken light of the stars, a human form walking on the sea. Superstitious, like all seafaring men, they broke into cries of terror. But it was only for the moment. Presently, near at hand, heard above the roar of the wind and the splash of the waves, came the sound—"Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid." Always impulsive, Peter could not wait till Christ came. "Might he go to him on the waters?" A moment more and he dashed overboard, but only to give a memorable lesson, for while he kept his eyes on his Lord he trod safely, but turning them in fear to the waters, he began to sink. The helping hand was near, however, and the two were in the boat after a few steps, and then the wind suddenly lulled and the apostles pulled through calm waters to the shore. No wonder that they kneeled at his feet, and owned him, for the first time human lips had done so, as "of a truth the Son of God."

¹ Matt. xiv. 22-33; John vi. 15-21; Mark vi. 45-52.

CHAPTER XXII

GALILEE—PHENICIA—CÆSAREA PHILIPPI

NUMBERS of those miraculously fed at El Batiha had slept in the open air through the night, the warm spring making this delightful, and lingered in the morning, on the spot, thinking Jesus was still in the neighbourhood; but finding that he had left, as many as could crossed in wood boats and the like, to Capernaum, seeking for him. Nor was he difficult to find. As they landed, he was on his way to the synagogue, attended by a crowd who, as usual, had brought their sick that he might heal them as he passed.¹

The preceding day had sorely grieved him, for it was clear that his hearers had little interest in his teaching, being too much preoccupied by ideas about the Messiah very opposite to his. His miraculous power exerted in their behalf, had only made them clamour for still further use of it for their personal or political benefit. To raise their thoughts, therefore, to worthier subjects, he urged them to seek spiritual good from his words—speaking of these as “bread from heaven!” which would give them eternal life.² Always gross in their ideas, they fancied he referred to some new precept they were to observe, and were confounded when he told them it meant only that they should accept him as the Messiah sent from God. The miracle of the preceding day had been either seen or was known by all around, but the appetite for wonders as a proof of Messiahship knew

¹ John vi. 25; Matt. xiv. 34-36; Mark vi. 53-56.

² John vi. 26-71. Capernaum was on the edge of Gennesaret.

no bounds. Could he not make bread rain down on them from heaven, as Moses did? The Rabbis had told them the Messiah would do this—for was it not written, "There will be abundance of corn in the land"? But to their astonishment he told them that the gift of Moses was not the true bread of heaven: it fell only from the lower air, while that which he would give them came down from the higher sky; from the great Father above.

Fancying he spoke of bread which would really make them immortal, many voices instantly clamoured for this wonderful gift. To their confusion Jesus answered that he, himself, was the bread of life. He had come down from heaven, he told them, to give them eternal life, and would assuredly, at the last day, raise all who accepted it at his hands. These words created a great sensation. Every one knew his family at Nazareth—Joseph, Mary, and the rest, and how could he say he had come down from heaven! He must be mad or possessed. Moreover, the Rabbis said that when the Messiah appeared no one would know whence he came.¹

But the crowd expected quite different benefits from the Messiah than being made better men by his instructions. He had told them that he must be "lifted up"—that is, crucified, while the Rabbis said that the Christ would never die.² He offered himself to them as a spiritual teacher, while they wished a revolutionary leader. "This is a hard saying," muttered most of his hearers, "who can hear it?" "He is not the Messiah for me," said others. He had disappointed popular expectation, and was henceforth forsaken by the multitude.

From this time Our Lord was no longer popular. It seemed as if even the Twelve would leave him, but Peter warmly pledged their loyalty. "To whom," said he, "could we go—Thou, only, hast the words of eternal life, and we believe and know that thou art the Holy One of God." Yet even among the apostles, as Christ knew and told them, there was a traitor.

¹ John vii, 27; Heb, vii, 3.

² John xii, 34.

Meanwhile the Heads of the Church were more than ever determined to crush One who challenged their teachings and lives, and threatened to lessen their influence with the people; Pharisees, Scribes, lawyers, doctors, and disputers, uniting with priests, Canonists, and Levites to silence, and, if possible, put him to death. Previous attacks having failed, they resorted to a new policy. Their spies reported that he and his disciples were living in open sin. He and they did not wash their hands before eating, in the formal way required.

It was a vital act of religion, as then understood, that before tasting food, water was to be poured on the hands, after which the finger tips were to be joined and lifted up, so that the water ran down to the elbows, and then they were to be turned down, so that it might run off to the ground. Fresh water was then to be poured on them as they were again lifted up, and twice more, as they were subsequently held down; the washing itself being done by rubbing the fist of one hand in the hollow of the other. To the horror of the Rabbis, it was found that, though they of course took care that their hands were clean before eating, neither Jesus nor his disciples carried out the ceremonial requirements at all. Such independence and audacity were intolerable. It was like setting up rivalry to the Mollahs, in Mecca or Medina.

Resolved to crush so daring an innovator, representatives of the Temple now sought Our Lord, asking, with smooth words, how it was that, as a religious teacher, he could permit his disciples to neglect a custom so sacred in the eyes of all pious Jews? ¹

Jesus was ready with his reply. They challenged him for slighting a mere form; he charged them with outraging the very fundamentals of morality. "How comes it," said he, "that you accuse me of irreligion for neglecting an empty form commanded only by men, when you, my accusers, habitually break the commands of God? He has, for example, required that we should honour our father and mother, and support them in old age,

¹ Matt. xv. 1-20; Mark vii. 1-23.

but you have invented a plan to enable children to shirk this great duty. If any one, say your Rabbis, be asked by his parents for help, he has only to answer that he has vowed his money as a gift to the Temple, or in their phrase, has made it 'Corban,' and they can press him no further. You have thus contrived a way to veil your breaking the law of God under a cloak of religiousness." Not contented with thus exposing their insincerity, he now turned on them indignantly as representatives of the religious life of the day. "Ye hypocrites! your religion is a pretence—you are mere actors, playing a part!"¹ Well has Isaiah painted you, when he introduces God as saying, "This people draw nigh unto me, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment of men which has been taught them."² These words were an open declaration of war against the whole religious world around him. He accused them of being mere make-believes, with no more than a skin-deep religion—mere shams and impostors. It was as if some humble curate, raised by splendid zeal, blameless life, and commanding eloquence, to widely recognised influence in the nation, were to tell our archbishops, bishops, clergy, ministers, and religious chiefs among the laity, that they were utterly unworthy of their position—that they made a farce of religion, caring only for an easy life, indifferent to the grossness of existing abuses, and leaving everything to the devil in this world, on pretext that they had only to do with the next. Can there be a doubt that, even if he were right,—he would be proclaimed an enemy of religion, and a slanderer of the servants of God?

Hatred of prophets is common to every age or country. No brave soul in any pulpit can hope to escape hatred and slander, or even worse, from those whom his outspoken truth rebukes. It was for being thus faithful that Jesus Christ was crucified.

¹ This is the meaning of "hypocritēs."

² Isa. xxix. 13, R.V.

By assailing the hypocrisy of the religious "professors" of his day the die had been cast. But he who had come into the world to witness to the truth, could let no cautious self-interest shut his mouth. The people must know the difference between the real and the false. Calling, therefore, the crowd round him, he impressed on them the lesson to be drawn from his fearless exposure of their teachers. The merely outward, he told them, does not defile; the things that come out of a man—his words and acts—born of his heart—they alone make him impure before God. Simple as this seems to us, it was the knell of mechanical religion for all time. Smooth respectability, exact performance of rites or acts of devotion, exemplary liberality for religious objects, lavishness of good deeds—were nothing, without fidelity in opposing whatever was contrary to the principles they professed.

It was hard even for the apostles to accept this revolt from their hereditary leaders. Nor was it easy for Christ to persuade them that those to whom they had always looked with superstitious reverence were only blind guides of the blind, or that the "customs," "traditions and commandments of men," on which they laid such stress, were to be "rooted up"¹ as not "planted" by God. Again and again was it necessary to show them that, to take one example of what was condemned, it did not make a man "unclean" or "defiled" to eat with "unwashed hands," while, on the contrary, to cherish evil in the heart made him vile before God.

Jesus had now roused against him the whole ecclesiastical and religious world. His popularity had in great measure passed away before the bitter enmity of the interests he had threatened and the blind fanaticism he had offended. He had for months seen his end approaching, and devoted himself to the religious

¹ Matt. xv. 13.

education of the Twelve, that they might continue his work after he had been put out of the way. He had denounced the religious world as evil, and it hated him for doing so.¹

Rumours of possible action against him by Antipas added to the difficulty of the situation. The murderer of the Baptist could hardly allow a successor of even greater influence to be at large. But the hatred of the religionists was much more dangerous, since it surrounded him everywhere; not in Galilee only. Apparently the first official step towards violence had been taken after his cure of the blind man, on his last visit to Jerusalem, and he had, in consequence, confined himself, from that time, to the north.² Even there, however, spies, as I have said, dogged his steps, and the synagogues were as a rule shut against him. His innocence and caution availed nothing. His death was determined. Yet it was possible to ward off the catastrophe for a time, and the interval was invaluable for the training of the Twelve. It was necessary, however, that he should, henceforth, move from place to place as safety required, so that we do not find him staying in one locality for any length of time.

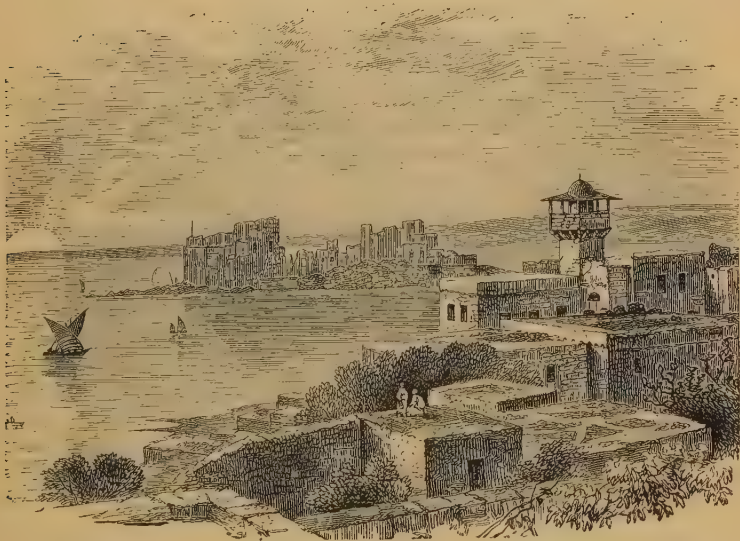
The nearer his end came, the more essential it was to prepare the Twelve for it, and to show them beforehand that it was part of a divinely ordered plan. Hence he took every opportunity of impressing this on them. His warnings against the religious world, priestly and lay, became, moreover, frequent and keener.

Forsaking the shores of the Sea of Galilee, he now turned to the north, taking with him the apostles. The road lay through a pleasant region of green hills and watered valleys, as he crossed, north-west, to the edge of the heathen territory of Phœnicia. From the hills which bounded this he must have looked down on the smoking chimneys of the glass-works of Sidon and of the dye-works of Tyre; on the lofty warehouses

¹ John vii. 7.

² John vii. 1.

of the docks, stored with the merchandise of the world; and on all the other details of the busy land of the Canaanite; the blue sea stretching beyond, to the "coasts of the Gentiles." He might have expected to remain unknown in such a region, but it was not possible.¹ A woman, by language a Greek, by birth a Phœnician having heard that he was in the neigh-



SIDON.

bourhood, made her way to him, pleading that he could cure her daughter, who was "grievously vexed with a devil." His discourse to the poor woman at the well of Samaria, and his bearing towards the outcasts of his own nation—the publicans and sinners,—had shown his goodwill even to those most hated by

¹ Mark vii. 24-30; Matt. xv. 21-28.

his people, and he had proclaimed that God was the Father of all men, whatever their race; but the bigotry of his countrymen made it impossible for him to show his sympathy openly with the heathen, since any tenderness to them would at once have shut the hearts of all Jews against his preaching.

The woman's coming to him when he was virtually in hiding, was very disturbing, as it might put his enemies on his track. For a time, therefore, he took no notice of her entreaties, but she was not to be denied, and became only the more earnest from his temporary refusal to hear her. At last the disciples, offended at her pertinacity, urged him to send her away. Was not her race, according to the Rabbis, accursed? Was not Beelzebub, the prince of the devils, their chief god? The answer of Jesus seemed to favour this harshness, when at length he spoke. "He was not sent," said he, "except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But it was impossible to silence a mother's love. Following him to the house, though he would fain have remained unknown, she cast herself at his feet and renewed her prayer. To the Twelve she was only "a dog," for thus the Jews regarded all heathen. Veiling the tenderness of his heart in affected roughness of speech, softened, doubtless, by the trembling sympathy of his voice and his gentle looks, he told her that the children—Israel, the sons of God—must be fed before others. "It is not right," added he, "to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." But with a woman's quickness, and a mother's love, deepened by trust in him notwithstanding his words, even this seeming harshness was turned into an irresistible appeal. "Yes, Lord," said she, "it is true; still, the dogs are allowed to eat the fragments that fall from the children's table." She had conquered. "O woman," replied Jesus, "great is thy faith; be it unto thee as thou wilt." His word was enough, and was accepted as such. Going home, she found her daughter cured.

He had seen this issue from the first, and had intentionally subjected her to a special trial, that the Twelve might learn how even a heathen could put Jews to shame by her simple faith. The miracle, moreover, taught them that not even a heathen was to be sent away unheard.

How long Jesus stayed in these parts is not known, but it would seem as if this incident had forced him to leave sooner than he intended. Crossing the country to the north-east, and passing up the side of Lake Merom, with its sweet open valley, he travelled on to the country round Cæsarea Philippi, and then turning south, made for the district east of the Lake of Galilee. Even there, however, his fame attracted multitudes of Jews settled in this half heathen region, and soon surrounded him with crowds, bringing numbers of sick to be healed.¹ Only one incident is given in detail. A man had been brought to him who was deaf, and could only stammer out unmeaning sounds. Taking him aside, perhaps to have more freedom or to avoid excitement, he put his fingers into the man's ears, and then touched his tongue with a finger which he had moistened on his own lips. These simple forms may have been used to arouse faith where hearing was lost, and thus prepare the heart for the miracle to be wrought. Looking up to heaven, as if to raise the poor man's thoughts to the Eternal Father, Jesus then uttered the single word of the popular dialect—Ephphatha—"Be opened," and the sufferer was cured. This and other wonders, as was natural, soon rang through the land, in spite of all commands to keep them private.²

The vast concourse attracted by Christ may be imagined if we remember that it was now spring, and that the simple habits of the people make sleeping in the open air natural to them; while a few dry figs suffice if needs be, for their food. Still, as sometimes happens even now among the crowd of pilgrims at Easter, many

¹ Matt. xv. 29-31.

² Mark vii. 31-37.

found their provisions exhausted, so that not a few might have sunk on the way home if no provision were made to supply them. Once more, therefore, the multitude were caused to sit on the grass,¹ and were fed from the scanty means on the spot, which were only seven of the thin round "loaves" of the country, and a few small dried fish from the Lake of Galilee. But these were enough, in Christ's hands, for the hunger of four thousand men, besides women and children; seven baskets of fragments gathered afterwards, showing there had been no stint.

Crossing the lake, he landed at Magdala, at the lower end of the small plain of Gennesaret—a spot now marked only by a few wretched mud hovels on a low knoll, with a miserable population, but then the site of a flourishing village. There, also, he found enemies ready to assail him. In their bitterness, the Pharisees had even united with the infidel Sadducees, whom they hated, and with the faction known as Herodians, from their supporting the abhorred line of "the Edomite Usurper." Eager for a fresh dispute, these curious allies, very likely strangers from Jerusalem, forthwith opened a discussion, during which they hoped he might add to the charges already recorded against him.²

"You claim," said they, "to be the Messiah, and have wrought many 'signs' in proof of your being so. But how do we know that these are not wrought by help of the devils, of whom the earth and the air are full? The Egyptian magicians did wonders, but our fathers rightly disbelieved them. If, however, you give us a sign from heaven, it will be different, for devils cannot do that. Give us bread from the sky, as Moses did, or fire and rain like Elijah, or make the sun turn back like Joshua."

But the value of proof depends on honest willingness to be convinced. When men are determined not to believe, no evidence affects them. Besides, the truth he taught was its own witness, and hearts unmoved by it were not worthy of his recognition. He turned, there-

¹ Matt. xv. 32-38; Mark viii. 1-9.

² Matt. xvi. 1-4.

fore, on his tempters, with a few biting words. "How is it," said he, "that you who think you can read the signs of the heavens, cannot read those of the times? In the evening you say, as you look to the west, "Fair weather to-morrow, for the sky is red; and in the morning—"Foul weather to-day, for the sky is red and lowering." When you see a cloud rising in the west you say, "A shower is coming," and when the south wind blows, you say, "There will be heat." If God has enabled you to judge of such matters as these, how much more must there be signs of the presence of the Messiah? Your own Scriptures, the events of the day, the preaching of John, and my miracles, teaching, and life, are such signs, if you be willing to read them. As the warning of Jonah to the Ninevites was the only one given them, my preaching will be the one sign vouchsafed to you! Hereafter, indeed, Jonah will be a sign in still another sense, for as he was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so I, when you put me to death, shall be the same time in the tomb, and shall come forth from it as Jonah from his living grave." So saying, he left them, for it was clearly unsafe to remain in their neighbourhood. Entering the boat once more, he crossed to the other side, a fugitive from the vengeance of the Jewish religious world.

Yet he had much to bear, not only from his enemies, but even from the simple fishermen who had given up all to follow him. They were very slow to understand his words, though he took care to speak to them only in language which one would have thought all could comprehend. As they rowed on, he began to warn them against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees, who might, otherwise, lead them astray.¹ "Take heed," said he, "of the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod," using the word leaven for teaching, from the likeness between the effects of the one on the meal with which it was mixed, and those of the other on the mind. The

¹ Matt. xvi. 6-12; Mark viii. 14-21.

one wrought a change on the whole of the meal; the other was fitted to act on their whole ways of thinking. But they were still gross and dull in their ideas, almost beyond conception. It happened that they had set off in their hurried flight with only one loaf in the boat, and they actually thought he referred to this. They forgot the twice repeated feeding of the multitude from well-nigh nothing. "O ye of little faith," interrupted Christ, "why do you talk of loaves of bread? Have you forgotten what I did in feeding the multitudes? How could you think you would want when I am with you? Do you not see that when I spoke of leaven, I meant not bread, but teaching and influence? Beware of what my enemies say of me or my discourses. They would fain fill your minds with false ideas, and turn you from me."

The boat, meanwhile, landed them at the opening of the green valley at the top of the lake, where he had fed the five thousand, and up this the little company went, passing through the town of Bethsaida Julias, so named by Herod Philip, in honour of the daughter of Augustus, his patron. But the journey was not to end here; Cæsarea Philippi, far to the north, was Christ's goal. He could not, however, get away unnoticed. During a short rest, some one who had heard of his presence brought a blind man¹ to him in the street, that he might be touched and healed. To have done so, however, in public, would have attracted notice, and Christ therefore took the sufferer by the hand and led him away to a more private spot, and there, after touching the blind eyes with his moistened finger, to fix the poor creature's thoughts upon his healer, the sightless orbs were so far restored that he could see the men near, in a cloudy haze, like trees. Another touch, and he could see clearly. "Go to your home," said Jesus, "without returning to the town, and tell no one about it." The less said of the acts or words of Our Lord the safer, at this time. The miracle had waked faith in the poor

¹ Mark viii. 22-26.

man, and to do good to one soul was enough for the Friend of sinners.

The retreat to which Christ was making was Cæsarea Philippi, on the north-east of Lake Merom, now El Huleh, close to Dan, the extreme northern limit of ancient Israel, as Beersheba was that of the extreme south. Almost on a line with Tyre, it was far away from the Rabbis and priests. Herod Philip had rebuilt the town a few years before Christ's birth, and called it Cæsarea in honour of the emperor. It had been the pleasure of his peaceful reign to adorn it with altars, votive images, and statues; and his own name had been added by the people to that which he had given it, to distinguish it from Cæsarea on the sea-coast. A great temple of white marble, dedicated to Augustus, had been built in it by Herod the Great, nineteen years before Christ's birth; and Pan, the shepherd god, was worshipped in the hollow recess from which one of the sources of the Jordan bursts out—his name giving the place that which it now bears, Panias or Banias. No spot in the Holy Land is more beautiful. The lofty range of Hermon, often snow-capped, looks down on it from the north—a towering hill close to it was then surmounted by a great castle, as it is to-day by ruins of a later fortress—lower hills rise on all sides, rich in olives and fruit trees of all kinds, with clumps of other verdure at many points, while glittering streams run down the green slopes in every direction. On the height above the cave of Pan there is even now a magnificent olive grove, and the noisy stream of the Jordan rushes through the village, amidst the deep shadow of overhanging trees, below a Roman bridge which Christ may have crossed. Mills driven by the tumbling water give life to the scene, as perhaps they did two thousand years ago, and a little island just below the bridge, embowered in green, adds an additional charm of colour. The men and women, well grown, straight, and intelligent, seem, in their simple picturesque dress, appropriate to the locality.

To this, the fairest part in the Holy Land, Jesus had now come, and might have refreshed himself amidst its charms had he been less occupied with higher thoughts. But he was a fugitive and an outlaw, rejected by his people, and safe only here, amongst the heathen. His public work was virtually over, for even in Galilee the Rabbis had poisoned the minds of the people against him, and his steady refusal to become a political Messiah had still further destroyed his popularity. As he would not head a revolt against Rome, but only preached the need of repentance and a better life, the nation, blindly self-righteous, turned against him as an accuser of his brethren. Thinking themselves the favourites of God, and destined to rule the world, they indignantly resented teaching so subversive of their pride. The death of the Baptist foreshadowed Christ's own fate, and he felt that the crisis of his life had come. It was necessary to prepare the Twelve for their high office, the spread of his kingdom after his death, and to kindle their devotion by proofs of his spiritual dignity, and power to fulfil his promises of reward to faithfulness, in the world to come. He had never asked them any question respecting himself, but it was desirable that they should know his greatness, now that the end was approaching. Before proclaiming him as the Messiah, they must distinctly accept him as such. His new Kingdom was to rest upon the personal love of its members towards him. His words, his life, his self-denial, his submission to the death of the cross, were to attract men to him. But until he revealed his majesty, which hitherto had been concealed, the most powerful impulse to such devotion would be wanting.

Now that he had found rest and quiet in the delightful region of Cæsarea Philippi, he determined to make this great self-revelation to his followers.¹ Retiring for a time to the privacy of the hills, to give his heart relief in communion with the Eternal Father, he re-

¹ Matt. xvi. 13-20 ; Mark viii. 27-30 ; Luke ix. 18-22.

turned ready to make the momentous disclosure. "Whom do men say," he asked, "that I, the Son of man, am?" The answer showed how far their ideas fell below the lessons of his teaching. "Some say, like Herod Antipas, that the spirit of John the Baptist has entered thee, and that thou workest thy miracles through its power, or that thou art John himself, risen from the dead, and appearing under another name. Some, that thou art Elijah, who, like Enoch, never died, but was taken up alive into heaven, and has now returned, as Malachi predicted, to prepare for the Messiah. Some, that thou art Jeremiah, come to reveal where he hid the Ark and the sacred vessels, in Mount Nebo, and thus introduce the Messiah; or that thou art one of the prophets, sent from the other world as a herald of the Deliverer." They could not yet add that they regarded him as the Messiah. Following up these answers, he went on to ask, "But whom say ye that I am?" and forthwith from the warm impulsive heart of Peter came all that he waited to hear. "Thou, my Master and Lord," said he, "art the Christ, the Son of the living God." In spite of all prejudices in favour of a Messiah who should found his kingdom by the sword, Peter, at least, saw the far higher glory of a peaceful Messiahship of truth and love. Nor did Jesus hesitate to accept this ascription of supreme dignity. "Blessed art thou, Simon, son of Jonas," said he; 'flesh and blood hath not revealed this to you—my Father in heaven has made it known to you.' Inter-course with Christ, and even his teaching, had been insufficient. The revelation of his greatness was from above, and the confession was earnestly adopted by the other apostles as their own. They had at last caught a momentary glimpse of his true glory.

That Peter should have been the first to utter this homage brought him a noble reward. The future Church would rest on him—the rock-like man, well called Peter, the Rock—as a foundation-stone, itself resting on Christ, the Living Rock, beneath. Built

up thus, the gates of death would be powerless against it, for it would outlive time. Varying the figure, Peter would be not only a rock-like foundation-stone, but also the head of the new Society during his life. Its keys were to be in his hands, to admit the worthy, and to shut out the undeserving—in other words, its government and discipline were committed to him. How he used this authority was seen by his rising as the mouthpiece of his brethren to propose the election of a successor to Judas; by his taking the foremost place on the Day of Pentecost; by his being chosen to admit the Centurion, Cornelius—the first Gentile convert thus honoured—to the fellowship of the Church, and by his constant recognition as the leader of the apostles. But Our Lord, very soon after conferring this great honour on Peter, extended it, in its essentials, to the rest of the disciples,¹ so that the astounding claims based on his so-called primacy are altogether shadowy and unfounded.

As the end of his public life was drawing near, it was, however, necessary that Our Lord should more than ever impress on the minds of his followers that he was to be a crucified and risen Saviour, not a Jewish Messiah. From this time, therefore, he spoke often of his approaching violent death.² "He must," he told them, "go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and Scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again." But it is hard to uproot fixed ideas. They still clung to the belief that he would be a great Jewish prince. True to his character, Peter could not quietly hear tidings so gloomy. Taking Christ by the hand, he led him aside, to dissuade him from a journey which was to end so painfully. "God keep this evil far from thee, my Lord and Master," said he. "You must not let it be. It will utterly ruin your work, for such a death is in poor keeping with the dignity of the Messiah. If

¹ Matt. xviii. 1, 18-20.

² Matt. xvi. 21-23.

there be any danger, why not turn it aside by your miraculous power? We cannot bear the thought of your suffering such indignities."

This was the very temptation urged on Our Lord by Satan in the wilderness,—to use his divine power for his own advantage, instead of employing it only to carry out the will of his Father. But it was at once driven off. Turning round to Peter he terrified him by the stern words—"Get thee behind me, out of my sight, thou tempter. Thou art laying a snare for me. Thy words are in keeping with the ideas of men who dream of ambition and worldly honour, not with the thoughts and plans of God."

Cæsarea Philippi was then a large town, and the beautiful country round was thickly inhabited. Here, as elsewhere, the name of Christ was on all lips, and his presence had soon drawn a large crowd which was round them as he rebuked Peter. Some of them were already inclined to accept him as their teacher, but they, no less than the apostles, needed clear ideas of what he required from disciples. Continuing, therefore, his address, he went on to tell all alike, that his followers, like himself, must suffer, before they entered on their reward. No one in those evil times could be a disciple, and escape trials, far less enjoy life and its comforts. Fidelity to him would, however, secure favour in the world to come. Hereafter he would return in glory and own and admit to his kingdom such as had faithfully confessed him to the end. What that kingdom was, some would, in a measure, see, even before death.¹

¹ Matt. xvi. 24-28.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE TRANSFIGURATION ; THE TRIBUTE MONEY ; COUNSELS

EIGHT days¹ later, Our Lord redeemed the promise to reveal his divine glory to some of his followers. Cæsarea Philippi stands, as I have said, amidst lovely hills, some of them richly wooded, and all of them green. He had spent the week in his usual work and was now about to leave the neighbourhood. The apostles must have been strangely troubled since his last warning of the violent death before him, and needed something to cheer them, and sustain their trust in him. He himself, moreover, must have thought of his approaching fate, with its shame and agony. But the glory to follow the Cross must also have risen ever more fully before him, and shed its light on his course. The time had come to allow the most trusted of his little circle to see what awaited him beyond the grave.

In the Middle Ages, and till a comparatively recent period, Mount Tabor, on the plain of Esdraelon, was supposed to be the scene of the Transfiguration. Rising in curious isolation, this height, by its nearness to Christ's Galilean home, seemed most likely to have been honoured by his self-revelation, but a closer study of the Gospel shows that he was at Cæsarea Philippi when he was transfigured.

Taking the three of his little band most closely in sympathy with him, and most prepared for the disclosure he was about to make, he ascended into the upper hills, towards evening, for silent prayer.² Peter,

¹ Matt. xvii. 1-13 ; Mark ix. 2-13 ; Luke ix. 28-36.

² Luke ix. 28.

James, and John were those so specially favoured; the three, it will be remembered, who had already entered, with their Master, the death chamber in the house of Jairus, and who were, hereafter, to be the only witnesses of the agonies of Gethsemane.

Brought up among the hills, such a region—its distant summits white in spots with snow, even in summer,—its pure air, and the solitude of its wooded slopes and shady valleys, must have been unspeakably grateful to the wearied and troubled spirit of Our Lord. Leaving his companions, he withdrew a short distance, though still in sight, and kneeling down, continued absorbed in prayer till evening fell, and the three, having finished their nightly devotions, had wrapped themselves in their abbas, or wide coats, and lain down on the hill-side to sleep.

But now, as he still prayed, the divinity within shone through his human form, kindling his very raiment to brightness, like that of the light, or of the snow on the far-off heights of Lebanon. Amidst such splendour the three could not sleep. Roused by it, they gazed, awe-struck, at the wonder, when, lo! two human forms, in glory like that of the angels, stood by his side—Moses and Elijah, the Founder and the Champion of the Jewish Church, which he had come to supersede. Their presence showed that the Law and the Prophets were henceforth to take a second place; but they had also another mission. They had passed through this life to a higher, and having entered on their heavenly reward, were able to speak with Our Lord as no others could, of his approaching death at Jerusalem and the glory that would follow. In such company, anxiety and conflict of soul passed away, not to return till Gethsemane.

Meanwhile, the three apostles gazed silently on the vision, not knowing what to think. Ere long, however, Moses and Elijah, having ended their communion with Christ, were about to return to heaven. Could they not be induced to stay? Peter, always first to speak, yet hardly knowing what he said, thought he

might get them to remain. Might he not make three booths for them and his Master, like those of the Feast of Tabernacles; green branches offering themselves on all sides for the purpose?

But now a bright cloud, the symbol of the Divine Presence, came down through the clear sky, and covered Our Lord and his mysterious visitants, and a voice from the midst of it was heard saying—"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." The apostles needed such a testimony, and never forgot it. Almost a generation later, Peter, in his Second Epistle, still dwells on it, recalling the time he was an eye-witness of the majesty of Christ, when he was with him on the holy mount, and heard the heavenly voice.¹

Sore afraid, the three fell on their faces, for who could stand before God? But when they, at last, dared to look up, the visitors were gone, and Jesus stood beside them, alone. Calming their fears, he requested them to tell no man what they had seen till he had risen from the dead, and then they slowly descended the hill. Such a caution, however, was hard to understand. When was this resurrection to be?—was he to rise alone, or were all the dead to be raised with him?—what did the Rabbis mean by saying that Elijah must come before the resurrection, and that the raising of the dead was to be the sign of the Kingdom of the Messiah having begun? A few words which showed that John the Baptist had been the forerunner for whom they looked under the name of Elijah, and that Christ, like him, would be put to death, helped to solve their difficulties and add to their regrets; but they could not even yet realize all that his words conveyed.

The traveller in Palestine finds himself even now surrounded at each stopping-place by the population of the neighbourhood, in hopes of his being able to cure their ailments, or simply from curiosity. In the same way, Jesus, on his reappearance, found a crowd

¹ 2 Pet. i. 16-18.

gathered round his disciples. His absence had brought them trouble, and they were hence doubly glad to see him again. A man in the throng had brought a son liable to fits, that they might heal him; but their attempts to do so failed. Some Scribes present, delighted at this, launched out sneers and cavils at them and their Master. Having asked what was the subject in dispute, the father of the boy pressed forward and told his sad tale—how the sufferer foamed at the mouth and gnashed with his teeth, the fits often seizing him when only a kind Providence hindered his being drowned or burned. Sad at the want of faith which had prevented his disciples effecting a cure, Jesus rebuked them for having learned so little, after being so long with him, and then desired the lad to be brought. No sooner, however, had the poor creature's eyes met those of Our Lord, than he fell to the ground in violent convulsions. "How long has he suffered in this way?" asked Christ. "From childhood," answered the father, adding melancholy details; "but if thou canst do anything at all, have compassion on me and him, and heal him." "*If thou canst?*" replied Jesus, repeating his words. "All things are possible to him that believeth." It was a trying demand from one in so great distress, for we may be willing to believe if we could, but full belief cannot be yielded without full conviction. All he could do was to break out into the pitiful cry which has risen since then from unnumbered hearts—"Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief." It was enough. The heart was willing. Turning, therefore, to the boy, Jesus addressed the demon who, it seems, possessed him and so disturbed his nature as to cause his disease—"Speechless and deaf spirit, I charge thee come out of him, and enter no more into him." A wild shriek and a dreadful convulsion followed, and then the boy lay still as if he were dead. But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifting him up, gave him over to his father, amidst the loudly expressed wonder of all, at the mighty power of God.

The stay in the district of Cæsarea Philippi soon after this came to a close. Jerusalem had an attraction for Our Lord which he did not seek to resist, though his visit, as he knew, meant his death. Passing, it may be, across the blossoming slopes which lie round the ancient site of Dan, he would journey southwards along the sweet valley of Lake Huleh, past the great beds of reeds rising out of the blue waters. The landscape is pleasantly undulating, with the hills of Galilee at a short distance on the right, and other hills rising from the edge of the lake, on the left: occasional reed-hut villages dotting the levels on the right shore. He was making his way to his old home at Capernaum, which he was about to visit for the last time. He could no longer, however, show himself as he had done before the Rabbis had stirred up so much ill-feeling against him, and he needed to be very careful in order to avoid arrest, which would have prevented his reaching the Holy City, where, alone, it was fitting he should offer himself up.

He stayed in Galilee therefore only a very short time; his purpose being to visit Jerusalem during the Feast of Tabernacles, which was fast approaching. With the disciples his conversation turned more and more on his approaching death, if, by any means, he might prepare them for it; and he shrank from public notice, though still ready to heal and comfort the wretched who came in his way. It was difficult, however, to root out from his followers the fixed ideas of their time. He might repeat, once and again, his warnings about the violent death before him; they still fancied that in spite of words so gloomy, he would come forward to establish a great Jewish kingdom, with his throne at Jerusalem, and even disputed on the way to Capernaum what places in it each would hold. All this he heard and saw; but for the time he said nothing; they themselves trying to keep the matter from him, ashamed that he should know it.

At last he reached his "own town," drawn thither,

no doubt, by the intense yearning natural to us all, to see for a last time haunts dear to us in former days. He loved the hills over which he had so often wandered; the orchards and vineyards now in their autumn glory; the houses amidst their gardens, so well known to him.

Very soon after his arrival, the local collector of the Temple tax, seeing him in the street, appealed to Peter for payment of the half shekel due by Christ; a sum which, though only equal, nominally, to about fifteen pence of our money, was in reality a considerable amount in that age, as it would have bought wheat enough for a man's use for a fortnight. From this tax the Temple treasury was filled with silver coin, for it was paid by every Jew over the world: vast wealth being thus accumulated, nominally for the expenses of the sanctuary, but, specially, for use against the Romans at some favourable opportunity.

That Christ would at once pay the sum due was to be expected, but before doing so he asked Peter whether kings levied taxes from their own children. Were they not free? Since, therefore, he was the son of Him for whose house this tax was raised, surely he ought not to be required to pay it. Yet it would not do, as things were, to stand on this right. He had no money, however, but all things were in his hands, so that he had only to tell Peter to let down his line in the lake and open the first fish caught. He would find in it a stater, which was twice as much as was needed.¹ No lesson of trust in God could have been more striking, nor could anything have been more needed by the apostles, who, hereafter, would have to depend so constantly on the care with which their wants would be supplied from above.

It was now a fitting time to revert to the discussion among the apostles by the way, and Jesus accordingly asked them respecting it. Having nothing to say for themselves, he led them into the house, and sitting down,

¹ Matt. xvii. 24-27.

proceeded to disabuse them of their false notions. There was no room in his kingdom, he told them, for any ambition but that of humility, for *he* would be reckoned greatest in it who was most lowly in heart. Then, calling a child of the family and lifting him into his lap, he told them that to be truly his they must abandon all their selfish thoughts, and become like the little one before them.¹ It was not disturbed by any dream of earning reward at his hands, but looked up to him with a loving joy, in absolute trust in his goodness. If any small service were asked of it, there would be no hesitation or thought of self, but instant glad compliance. So must it be with them, if they would have citizenship in his kingdom. Love that thinks first of others and is its own reward, alone made any one his true follower. They must be humble, unselfish, and self-sacrificing, if they would be Christians. Nor must the natural pride of the heart tempt them to look down on those who thus showed a child-like spirit: to honour them would be regarded by him as honouring himself.

On their journey, the Twelve had met some one who was casting out devils in their Master's name, though not following him, and had charged him to desist, because he was not one of their number.² Our Lord, however, at once ordered them to let him alone. Working in his name, he could not speak against him, and one who was not against him he reckoned on his side. "No one," he continued, "who, because you are my disciples, shows you goodwill, if only by a cup of cold water, is to be lightly esteemed. Even so slight a sign of love to me is noticed with favour above. On the other hand, to turn away any humble soul, as you might have turned away him whom you rebuked, is a sin so great that it would be better for you to hang round your neck one of the large millstones turned by an ass, and drown yourselves in the lake, than to commit such an offence. And as it is better to die

¹ Matt. xviii. 1-14.

² Mark ix. 38-42.

than to lead any one astray, so whatever keeps you from a godly life, if it were dear to you as your foot or your hand, should be put away, that you may not for its sake lose life eternal. Take heed, therefore, not to slight any lowly, child-like soul, for I tell you that all such are under the loving care of the highest angels who stand before God. If you meet with such an one who has gone astray, do your utmost to bring him back. For what shepherd, feeding, say, a hundred sheep, on our hills, does not leave the ninety and nine, to go after one that has strayed, searching far and near till he find it? And when he has done so, does he not rejoice more over one thus saved, than over the ninety and nine that had not strayed? So it is a grief, above, that a single soul be lost, and a ground of heavy displeasure if its loss has risen from any fault of my disciples."

"If a brother injure you, do not wait till he come to make amends, but go to him privately and tell him his fault, that, if possible, you may win him and end the trouble. If, however, he will not hear you, go again, with two or three witnesses, that, should he still refuse to do right, you may have proof that you, at least, wished to have peace. As a last step you will have to lay the matter before the assembled brethren, that they may use their good offices, and only in case of his refusing to hear even them, are you at liberty to stand aloof from him and treat him otherwise than as a disciple."¹

That each Christian assembly might have full power to act in such an extreme case, he now formally extended to all "the disciples" the right to decide in his name as to the exclusion of the offender from membership in his society.² Thus, while Peter had first received power in the infant Church, all the disciples were now put on the same footing, and, indeed, Our Lord went even farther, for he told them, that if two of them should agree on any matter thus affecting the interests of his

¹ Matt. xviii. 15-17.

² Matt. xviii. 18. Luke x. 1 speaks of more than seventy.

kingdom, and should ask his Father in heaven to grant it, they would be heard. He himself, he added, would always be among them, wherever two or three were gathered together in his name, and that would secure their prayers being answered.¹

Peter had listened earnestly to this discourse, but felt at a loss to know how far Christ wished the spirit of forgiveness to be carried. Would it do to forgive seven times? "Not seven times, but seventy times seven, if necessary," replied Our Lord. "The servants of a certain ruler," said he, continuing, "having been called to a reckoning, one came who owed him ten thousand talents—a sum which he could not hope to pay. 'Sell him as a slave, with his wife and children and all he has, towards my debt,' cried the ruler. But the servant fell down at his knees, and implored him to have patience, and he would be paid in full. Touched with pity, his master ordered him to be set free, and not only gave him time, but, knowing he could never pay, forgave him the debt altogether. He had not, however, learned the lesson of mercy thus taught. Meeting a fellow-slave who owed him only a paltry hundred pence, less than the seven hundred thousandth of what he himself owed, he seized him by the throat and demanded instant payment, rejecting the poor man's appeal for compassion, and casting him forth-with into prison. Such harshness so angered their common master, that, upbraiding him for not showing a fellow-slave some of the pity shown to himself, he handed him over to the torturers to deal with as they thought fit, till he had paid all he owed. In like manner, the infinite pity of Heaven in forgiving us our sins, should surely lead us to the widest compassion towards our fellow-men; nor, if we fail in showing this, could we hope to escape a worse fate at the hand of God than that of the pitiless creditor in the parable."²

¹ Matt. xviii. 19, 20.

² Matt. xviii. 21–35.

CHAPTER XXIV

TO JERUSALEM ONCE MORE

THE Feast of Tabernacles was held in the month Tisri; part of our September and October. Christ had been now for about six months virtually hiding from his enemies. Even Galilee was no longer open to him. But the approaching feast at Jerusalem offered a great opportunity of spreading the "good news," and he could not stay away, whatever the danger.

He was still in Capernaum when the northern pilgrims set out to reach the Holy City on the first day of the Feast; a time all the more joyful because it fell on the week after the Day of Atonement—the Jewish Lent. His relations had apparently come over from Nazareth to induce him to accompany them, though, as yet, they had not declared themselves his disciples.¹ "If you be really the Messiah," said they, "surely your proper place is Jerusalem." For they still clung to the idea of a Jewish political empire as the object of the Messiah's coming. But Jesus would not join them. They might go up safely at any time, but the authorities hated him, and to go with his friends would but draw on them official suspicion. He would come up afterwards, with his immediate followers only. Had he travelled with the excitable Galilean pilgrims they might have raised disturbance in his favour in the Holy City. The feast lasted seven days and closed on the eighth, which was the greatest, so that he could afford to wait.

¹ John vii. 1-9.

The hour at last came. Leaving the quiet of the lake and taking the route over the uplands, to Tabor, he crossed the great plain of Esdraelon, to Engannim, where he was once more among the Samaritans, with their fierce hatred of everything Jewish. This was soon to show itself. As was his custom, he had sent forward to ask shelter for the night in some village, but it was at once refused, because he and his followers were on the way to Jerusalem.¹ John and James, in their indignation, would fain have had their Master call down fire from heaven on people so unfriendly. Our Lord, however, was as gentle as they were fierce, and, rebuking them sternly for such a spirit, told them to go on quietly to another village.

Yet even in Samaria some were kindly disposed to him and wished to follow him. But he knew the troubles of the near future, and instead of encouraging any to join him, held out a prospect so gloomy that the intending disciples appear to have turned away.

Months had passed since the Twelve had been sent out to preach through the strictly Jewish parts of the country. There were more disciples now, and it was desirable to make known the "good news of the kingdom" to Samaritans as well as Israelites, for Christ was the Saviour of mankind, and not of Jews only. Besides, it may have been advisable to lessen the number of his followers before entering Jerusalem, that he might do so with less notice. No fewer than seventy disciples were, therefore, selected by him—perhaps because the Jews fancied there were just seventy nations in the world—and sent out with the widest commission to preach to all classes.² Nothing could more strikingly show the difference between Christ and the Rabbis, for, to these, the only end of any mission was to make Jews of their converts. Jesus could offer his missionaries no money for their journey, but they were ready to set out without it. Indeed he expressly told them, as

¹ Luke ix. 51-56.

² Luke x. 1-11.



TENT LIFE IN THE EAST

he had told the apostles, to take neither money nor a wallet for food, but to trust to the goodwill of the people for shelter and maintenance. Their very appearance was also to show their poverty, for they were to wear only the cheap sandals of the poor, while they were to omit the tedious and empty salutations of passers-by, which caused great delay, and were mere idle forms. As Jews, they had hitherto refrained from entering the house of any one not of their nation, but now they were free even to become guests of any one who would receive them. It was the first great lesson that the new faith was a religion for all mankind.

The refusal of the Samaritan villagers to receive Our Lord had caused him to cross the Jordan and go south along its eastern border. At one of the villages on the road, ten men, hideous with leprosy, hearing of his approach, rose from the spot where they had been sitting on the ground, for alms, and standing at a distance as the Law required, their mouths covered, cried out, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us."¹ Without stopping, the All-merciful sent hope to them by the words, "Go, show yourselves to the priest," a command which could only mean that before they reached Jerusalem to do so, they would be healed. Obeying the order, all forthwith set out, to find, as they went on, that the leprosy was gone. That they should have returned to thank their benefactor might have been expected, but only one of the ten had the good feeling to do so, and he was a Samaritan. Throwing himself at Our Lord's feet, he poured out his thanks, and had the joy of being told to "rise and go his way, his faith had made him whole." As a Samaritan he would need to show himself to a priest at Gerizim; but his faith was none the less accepted, for the Samaritans worshipped God as fervently as the Jews, and he had shown more true gratitude than the nine who were of Jewish blood.

¹ Luke xvii. 11-19.

The Feast of Tabernacles was one of the three great feasts which every Hebrew was required to attend, though, in fact, most seem to have gone up only once a year. It commemorated the tent life of Israel in the wilderness by the erection of countless booths of green boughs in the streets and yards, and on the flat roofs, as is still done at this feast by Jews in every part of the world, including even the slums of the East End of London. Living in these, the throngs of pilgrims enjoyed under the warm skies a week of special holiday, going up to the Temple at stated times. On the "great day of the feast" they did so with a citron in one hand, and a branch of palm, twisted round with willow and myrtle, in the other, to see the priests, amidst great rejoicing, bring up water from the Pool of Siloam in the valley below, to be poured out over the sacrifices. Through the week, illuminations by night, and dancing of men and women apart, concluded each day.

The authorities were disappointed during the first days of the feast to find Jesus absent. Suddenly, however, when the rejoicings were at the highest, he appeared in the Temple porches where the Rabbis taught, and having sat down, began to teach the crowd who thronged to hear him.¹ Astounded at his boldness, after the steps they had taken against him on his previous visits, the priests were at a loss what to do. Some added to the perplexity by reporting that he taught like one of the prophets; speaking as if directly for God. Still more, instead of the dry hair-splitting about matters of no importance, in which the Rabbis delighted, he spoke only on the highest themes. The gracious goodwill of God to man, the conditions on which it could be secured, were subjects appealing to all. Nor was it less striking that while urging the loftiest personal claims, he did so with such humility that all he said seemed only what

¹ John vii. 14.

became him. His knowledge of the Scriptures and his skill in their use were no less astonishing, for he expounded them with a force and clearness all his own. "How could a common man like this," asked the officials—"a man never trained in the schools of the Rabbis, understand the Scriptures thus?"

An angry deputation from the chief priests at last approached, challenging his right to teach as he did without a licence. They only obtained, however, the answer that while they were taught of men, he was taught directly by God; the proof lying in his words and life. If they were in communion with God they would recognise his doctrine as divine. Then, turning on them, he boldly told them that while they charged him with not *knowing* the Law, they did not *keep* it. They had, as they knew, wished to put him to death for healing a poor man on the Sabbath, as a violation of the Law, when they ought to have known that love to our neighbour is set above the Sabbath by the Law itself. But, now, the crowd, ignorant of the designs of the authorities against him, and prejudiced by their charging Our Lord as working through the power of Beelzebub, turned against him. He must really be under the power of a devil. The Rabbis were right. Who had spoken of killing him?

Without noticing their interruption, however, Jesus repeated the statement that their leaders were plotting his death for doing an act of mercy on the Sabbath. They forgot that they themselves did many things on the Sabbath which had no such justification as his kindness to the blind man. For example, they circumcised children on the Sabbath. They should judge righteously, not by mere quibbles. Some now came up who fancied it possible that the authorities, doubting at last whether he might not, after all, be the Messiah, had given him liberty to teach. The mere suggestion, however, at once raised a hot discussion. Did not the Rabbis say that the Messiah, though born at Bethlehem, would disappear and return

from no one knew whither? But this man was from Nazareth. They knew whence he came.¹

Hearing this, Jesus broke off his discourse, and turned to the noisy disputants, telling them that though he was from Nazareth, he had come forth from the Father above, who alone had the right to appoint any one as the Messiah; and thus, after all,



THE VILLAGE OF SILOAM.

they really did not know whence he came. But such words, implying his pre-existence with God, roused the fanaticism of his hearers to the utmost, for he had claimed Jehovah as in a special sense his Father—a sense which made him equal with God. For a moment it seemed as if they would hurry him outside

¹ John vii. 1-27.

the city and stone him, there and then, for blasphemy; but his hour had not yet come, and their rage died away in angry words.¹

The fame of his miracles, which could not be denied, was meanwhile spreading, and the number who believed in him daily increased. To stop this, the authorities, both Pharisee and Sadducee, mortal enemies at other times, issued a warrant for his arrest, and sent some of the Temple police to carry it out. The sight of these officials told the whole story to Our Lord. His death was clearly a matter of a very short time, and led him at once to speak of it. He would soon, he told them, return to his Father in heaven, who had sent him, and then woe to Jerusalem for rejecting him! They would long for him in those days, but they would not be able to bring him back. The only meaning, however, drawn by the crowd was that perhaps he meant to flee to some distant land and there hide himself.²

No further attempt to lay hold on him was made during the rest of the week, so that he was still free to address the people. One of the days was marked, as I have said, by a procession of priests and Levites bearing water for the altar, from the pool of Siloam, amidst the rejoicings of a great multitude, and the incident served as a text from which so ready a speaker as Christ drew a vivid lesson. "If any one thirst," cried he, "let him come to me, and I will give him living water, which shall flow from his lips and life in holy words and deeds!" He spoke of the Holy Spirit which would descend on those who became truly his followers.³

Such discourses left various impressions on the audience. To some he appeared to be the prophet expected to come before the Messiah, to others the Messiah himself; but this opinion led to fierce disputes, some asking if the Messiah could possibly come out of

¹ John vii. 28-30.

² John vii. 30-36.

³ John vii. 37-39.

Nazareth when the Scriptures spoke of him as to be born in Bethlehem. Meanwhile the division of feeling ensured Christ's safety, for his enemies did not venture to touch him, in the face of the strong support he was receiving from not a few. Even the Temple police, who had kept near, went back to their chiefs without disturbing him, declaring that no man ever spoke as he did. Nor were they moved by the taunts of the Pharisees, that respectable people of all classes held aloof from him, while the common rabble who followed him were already cursed of God. One voice only was heard in the council offering a faint word for him,—that of Nicodemus, who had come to him by night. "Was it right," asked the timid man, "to condemn any one before he was heard?" But he only drew on himself the insulting question whether he, also, was from Galilee. Did he not know that no prophet had ever risen in that district? So bitter was the jealousy between south and north, that they forgot the names of Jonah, Hosea, and Nahum, who, while prophets, were also Galileans.¹

¹ John vii. 40-52.

CHAPTER XXV

AMONG FRIENDS AT BETHANY

TAKING advantage of the hospitality of friends at Bethany, on the Mount of Olives,¹ Christ slept under their roof each night while in Jerusalem, returning in the morning to the Temple. One day, as he sat amidst a crowd of listeners, a woman of the humbler ranks, who had been guilty of immorality, was brought to him, perhaps in the hope that he might speak or act contrary to the Law, respecting her case. It was usual to bring matters of all kinds before any Rabbi: they would hear what the Rabbi Christ had to say. It was for the husband to bring forward the charge, but they forgot this in their zeal to compromise Our Lord. If he insisted that she should be stoned to death, it would hurt his popularity, for this requirement of the Mosaic Law had long ceased to be carried out. If, on the other hand, he dismissed her, he would seem to treat the Law with disrespect. Besides, the Roman authorities, while granting the Jewish courts liberty to inflict all minor punishments, retained to themselves the infliction of capital sentences. But he was not to be snared by their craft. Stooping down for a moment and writing some words on the dust at his feet,—perhaps those he was just about to utter—he presently looked up at the accusers and smote them with the request that he among them who was free from sin of a like kind, should cast the first stone at her, as commanded by Moses to be done by the chief

¹ John viii. 1.

witness.¹ Conscience-struck, they could do nothing, but moved away, to the last man, leaving Jesus alone with the woman, in the midst of the crowd. "Woman," said Christ, on seeing this, "where are thine accusers? did no one condemn thee?" "No one, Lord," answered the poor creature. "Neither shall I," replied Our Lord. "I do not come to be a judge in matters of law. It is their part, not mine, to carry out the case against thee. Go, repent of thy guilt, and sin no more."²

Some fragments of his addresses in these days, which have been preserved, show that, as his end approached, he spoke ever more plainly of his spiritual dignity and claims. In one, pointing, perhaps, to the sun rising over the hills of Moab, in the East, he told his audience that he was the Light of the World—the Fountain of Divine Truth—by whom alone men could be guided in the path of eternal life. His teaching, his life, and his deeds showed this, if those to whom he spoke had not been blinded by their sins. No proof could be more clear that he was not alone, but had his Heavenly Father always with him. This he seems to have often repeated, adding in one case, that God was ever with him, because he did, always, the things that pleased Him: words which none of his followers, even the best, would have dreamed of using, but so appropriate on the lips of one so meek and lowly as Our Lord, that they created a deep and wide impression in his favour.

"If you accept the truth," said he, as the approving murmur swelled round him, "it will make you free." He meant, of course, free from the sins to which they had hitherto been slaves; but they were too self-righteous to understand him, and thought at once of ordinary freedom. The nation was helplessly subject to Rome, whose soldiers garrisoned Jerusalem; but they shut their eyes to this, and spoke as if they were still independent. "Whoever commits sin," continued Christ, "is its slave. To be descended from Abraham

¹ Deut. xiii. 9, 10; xvii. 7; Acts vii. 58.

² John viii. 2-11.

BETHANY



does not help you in this matter. I, God's Son, must make you free, if you are to be free indeed. You call yourselves sons of Abraham, but, in reality, you are not, for God looks not to national descent, but requires spiritual likeness." In that respect, said he, they had no connection with the patriarch. Their spiritual father, in fact, was the devil, not Abraham. If they were, as they claimed to be, children of God, they would love him who spoke. Instead of this, they shut their ears against him. "You are an enemy of the children of God," cried his opponents, "a Samaritan, and, as the Rabbis tell us, are certainly possessed by a devil, else you would not speak thus." "I have not a devil," replied Jesus, "and you dishonour God, who has sent me and honours me, by saying so. I tell you again, that he who believes on me and obeys my voice, shall never taste death." "Whom do you make yourself?" shouted the crowd. "Abraham and the prophets are dead, are you greater than they?" "Abraham," quietly continued Christ, "rejoiced to see my day afar off." "It is 2000 years since Abraham's day," broke in a voice, "and you are not fifty years old yet; do you mean to say that you have seen Abraham?" "I mean to say," replied Jesus, "far more than that—before Abraham was born, I AM." This was the very phrase in which Jehovah had spoken of himself in Egypt, and could only mean a claim to be no less than God. His hearers instantly felt this, and rose in wild fury against one who appeared to them such a blasphemer. Snatching up stones from the rubbish of the unfinished parts of the Temple round, they would fain have killed him on the spot, but he hid himself among the crowd, and in the confusion passed safely out of the throng.¹

In these closing weeks of his life, Our Lord found a home, from time to time, with a family at Bethany, on the east side of the Mount of Olives. He may

¹ John viii. 31-59.

have known them on former visits to Jerusalem, and perhaps they were related to Simon, the leper, whom he had healed on his first journey to these parts. Bethany is now a poor hamlet, on the slope of the hill, with a few rough enclosures of fig-trees and the like beside it. Nothing can exceed the poverty of its few inhabitants, but it was evidently a much more prosperous spot in Christ's day. Its homes then lay, flat-roofed and whitewashed, amidst fields and trees which relieved the bareness of the hill, above and below. Here lived two sisters, Martha and Mary, who, with their brother Lazarus, always welcomed him with a delightful friendship. Both sisters were worthy women; but while Martha, the elder, more practical than Mary, busied herself with womanly diligence and interest in the humble affairs of the household, the other was eager to catch all she could from the lips of Our Lord, and lovingly sat at his feet whenever she could. To one whose wants were so simple as those of Christ, this did not cause any inconvenience; but Martha, anxious to show all possible hospitality, thought it unkind, till quietly told that her busy care, while lovingly owned, was not required to be so engrossing.¹

In one of his journeys to or from the Holy City, Our Lord was accosted by a Rabbi, who inquired how, in his opinion, one might secure eternal life.² Christ at once asked him what the Law required, but he was ready with the very fitting answer; that it told him to love God with all his heart, soul, strength, and mind, and his neighbour as himself. "Quite right," replied Our Lord; "this do and you shall live." The questioner, however, wishing to show how fully he did all he had said, asked, "But who is my neighbour?" To a Jew no one was so but a brother Jew. A man of another faith or race was an enemy. Knowing this well, Jesus replied by a parable.

¹ Luke x. 38-42.

² Luke x. 25-37 (paraphrased).



THE TRADITIONAL INN OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

"A certain man," said he, "went down from Jerusalem to Jericho—a wild, steep road, dangerous from frequent robberies and murders. On the way, some men rushed out on him from the hills at the side, stripped him, for he was a poor man, whose clothes were all they could take from him, beat him, and in the end left him half dead. As he lay bleeding and naked on the rough stones, a priest going down to Jericho went past; but when he came near, he hastily crossed to the other side of the road, to keep himself from being defiled by blood, or by touching a person perhaps 'unclean,' and hurried on. Soon after, a Levite, coming by, when he saw the poor man, stepped over to him, and stood coldly looking at him for a time, but presently went on, leaving him as he lay.

"A Samaritan, however, travelling that way, and seeing him, went to him, took from his saddle-bag wine and oil, to cleanse and soothe his wounds, and having bound them up, set him on his own beast, never thinking whom he might be helping, whether Jew, heathen, or fellow-countryman, but seeing only a fellow-man in distress, and never troubling himself about defilement, or the danger of such a place. Nor did he leave him till he had conducted him to the khan, or shelter for travellers, which stands on the roadside three hours from Jerusalem. There he made him over to the man in charge, giving him two denarii¹ to meet any expenses, and telling him if that was not enough he would pay him what was needed besides, on his return.

"Which of these three," asked Christ, "do you think was neighbour to him that fell among thieves?" The Rabbi, true to his national hatred, would not utter the word Samaritan, but was forced to say, "He that had mercy on him, I suppose." "Go thou and do likewise," replied Jesus.

Among other fragments of the teaching of Our Lord

¹ Equal to 6s. or 7s. of our money. Five denarii, worth, nominally, 8½d. each, were the grant for wheat for a man for a fortnight at Rome.

in these days, we find a parable to show the benefit of perseverance in prayer. "Suppose a man," said he, "come to a neighbour after the house door is shut for the night, and ask him to lend him three of the round, flat loaves you use, as a stranger has come unexpectedly and there is nothing to give him. Very likely he will refuse for a time to get up, yet, if the borrower persevere, he will rise in the end and give him what he asks. Now, if selfish man be thus, how much more readily will the gracious God grant their petitions to those who earnestly pray to Him?"¹

About this time the seventy disciples returned in great joy at their success, "even the devils having been subject to them." Such a report must have been cheering to the worn heart of the Master; and, indeed, for the moment, it seemed to put away the gloom that oppressed him. Satan appeared to have fallen from power, as a lightning flash rushes from heaven to earth. Yet it was necessary to caution them against pride. Their greatest joy should not be in their power to work miracles, but in the thought of their names being written in heaven.²

The idea that every misfortune in life was a direct punishment for sin, committed either by the sufferer or his forefathers, was then universal. Hence, on one occasion, a man born blind having passed, the question was raised whether he or his "parents" had brought this calamity upon him.³ Jesus, however, told them that suffering was not to be regarded as a punishment for particular sins in any one, and in this case had been so ordered that the goodness of God might be shown in the cure of the blind man. Stooping, therefore, and mixing some of the dust with saliva, so as to make clay of it, he touched the man's eyes with the wet earth, and then sent him to wash in the pool of Siloam, under the east wall of the Temple. Neither the clay nor the pool could restore eyesight, but obedience to the divine

¹ Luke xi. 5-13.

² Luke x. 17-24.

³ John ix. 1-41.

command had a mighty power, so that the blind man had no sooner washed than his eyes were perfectly restored.

Such a miracle could not be hidden, nor could it be expected that he who was thus wondrously cured would be silent. It chanced, however, that it was the Sabbath when Christ had opened his eyes, and in doing so had made clay of the moist dust. This was working on the holy day, and must be punished! Hearing the tale, therefore, the authorities of the Law and Temple, doubly furious that Christ should once more have broken the Sabbath, summoned the formerly blind man before them, and demanded from him an account of his cure. "He who gave him his eyesight," said they, "could not be from God, for his making the clay was a breaking of the Sabbath." But they had to deal with a sturdy, brave-hearted man. "How would God give such power to any one who commits open sin?" asked he. "It could not be a sin to make the clay, else God would not have blessed the act by opening my eyes after it."

Such an answer threw his accusers into confusion; some hesitating to go farther in the matter. Finally, as a compromise, they determined to examine the man again. "What did he really think of one who thus openly broke the Sabbath?" "Why," said the brave fellow, "I think him a prophet." But this only made things worse. The parents must be called. What did they think? They knew the danger of frankness in such circumstances, however, and were cautious. "Their son was of age, let them ask him. They could say nothing." They did not wish to be put out of the synagogue. Once more therefore the man was brought forward. "Let him give God the glory; as for him who cured him, his making clay on the Sabbath showed he was a sinner." "Very strange," stoutly replied the man. "I know nothing about his being a sinner, but I know that I used to be blind and that I see now." Having failed to get any admission from him, some

of them fell back on their first question, and asked him to go over his story again. "I have told you the whole already," replied he, "and you did not listen. Do you also wish to become his disciples?" "*His* disciples!" shouted the judges, forgetting their dignity. "We are disciples of Moses, who spoke for God; as for this fellow, we know not who has sent him: Beelzebub, we suppose." "Still more strange," answered the man. "You don't know whence he is? and yet he has opened my eyes! Who but God could give him such power?" "What," screamed the officials, "do you, a wretch branded from your birth with the mark of God's anger for sin, dare to teach *us*? You are excommunicated." And they cast him out of the synagogue, there and then.¹

Meeting him soon after, Christ, having commended his fidelity, asked him if he believed on the Son of God? "Who is he, Lord," answered the man, "that I may believe on him?" "I that speak to you am he," replied Our Lord. It was enough. "Lord," said he, "I believe."

A crowd had gathered, and Jesus turned to them with a warning not to follow such blind guides as those who had condemned the poor man and himself.² "You know," said he, "how the shepherd on the hills cares for his flock, and how the wolf scatters and tears it. I am the good shepherd: my accusers are wolves. I lay down my life for the sheep. But the hireling, who has no love for the sheep, flees before the wolf, and leaves the flock to perish. I know my sheep, and they know me, and, as I said, I am ready to die for them. Yet I have other sheep than Israel. Them also will I bring together, that there may be one fold and one shepherd."

¹ This cut him off from attending his church (synagogue) and boycotted him in the community. During his excommunication, he could not shave his head like other Orientals, and he could enter the Temple only through a particular gate. If, moreover, he died excommunicated, every one threw a stone on his grave as that of one who had passed away under a curse.

² John x. 1-21.

But neither his disciples nor the crowd around could understand the wide charity of such words. Salvation, they thought, was limited to the Jew. Any hint of mercy to the Gentiles woke bitterness. "He has a devil and is mad," cried some; "who would listen to him?" Others, however, were thoughtful enough to remark that "these are not the words of one who is possessed, nor could a devil open the eyes of one who had been born blind."

It was now winter, when the Dedication Festival was held, in commemoration of the re-opening of the Temple, after it had been closed and defiled by Antiochus Epiphanes, the Syrian. Christ had been nearly three months in or near Jerusalem, and was present at this feast. The weather proved wet and rough, so that he was glad, like the crowd, to shelter himself in the Temple porches, when addressing the people. Curiosity respecting him was unabated; not a few hoping he would even yet declare himself the Messiah in their sense of the word. One day, therefore, some of the Pharisees plainly asked him what they were to think.¹ Was he the Messiah, of course in their meaning, or not? Christ, however, refused to be snared by any such question, but appealed to the evidence given by his miracles and his teaching, adding that if their hearts were right they would believe such testimonies. All who were his, however, were so for ever, here and hereafter. Given to him by God, none could take them from him, for he and the Father were One. At such words, which claimed oneness with Jehovah, the crowd once more rushed about for stones with which to kill him, but the meek question—for which of his many acts of mercy done before them would they thus kill him?—checked their fury. "We say nothing against your good works," cried some, "but will stone you because you make yourself God." Instead of withdrawing the awful claim, however, he repeated it.

¹ John x. 22-42.

Instantly a rush was made to seize him and drag him outside the city to stone him to death, but he shrank back into the crowd, and passing through it, escaped.

Jerusalem and Judea were now closed against him, as Galilee had been for some time past. Only one district—that beyond the Jordan—seemed any longer safe, and to this, therefore, he retired, preaching to large numbers in the region where John had formerly appeared.¹ But his comparative quiet was soon disturbed, for a message came to him, in hot haste, from Bethany, that Lazarus, his friend, lay dangerously ill.² There could be no doubt of his affection for the sufferer or his sisters, yet, instead of setting off at once to restore him, he astonished his disciples by remaining two days where he was, though it had taken a day for the messenger to reach him, and would require another to get to Bethany. To his disciples it seemed as if he hesitated on account of the violence lately offered him at Jerusalem. On the third day, however, he surprised them by proposing to return forthwith to the scene of danger. His time had not yet come, he said, and till it had, he was safe. He was going to Bethany that he might show forth the glory of God by raising Lazarus from the grave, for he was dead. For that end there had been the delay. It seemed a wild risk to go back to the very spot where he had so recently been in such peril, but the Twelve, however reluctantly, followed him. "We can at worst," said Thomas, "only die with him. Let us go."

As he approached the village, to reach which he had gone round by Jerusalem, as the easier road, word was carried to the house that he had at last come. The two sisters had been sitting in a darkened room, veiled and unsandalled, amidst neighbours and mourning women, who were ever and anon breaking

¹ John x. 40-42.

² John xi. 1-46.

the awful silence by screams and lamentations for the dead. Martha, however, on hearing of Our Lord's arrival, at once rose and went off, in black, and deeply veiled, to meet him. "Had you been here," said she, "my brother would not have died! Yet," added she, "though he be dead, I believe that God will hear your prayer, even if you ask that the corpse be brought back to life." "Your brother will rise again," replied Christ. "At the last day, he will, I know," sobbed Martha. "I am the Resurrection and the Life," replied Christ, in words which have since brought hope and comfort to untold millions. "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" "Yes, Lord," sobbed Martha, "I believe that thou art the Messiah, the Son of God, who should come into the world," and having thus spoken, left, to call her sister. A few minutes more and Mary was at his feet in tears, repeating Martha's regret at his delay in coming. Meanwhile, as at all such gatherings in the East, loud sobbings and wails broke forth from the crowd. Their sympathy was roused for the afflicted household, and yet they were from Jerusalem, which had rejected Christ. Our Lord's cheeks flushed for a moment at the thought of their hardness towards God when so tender towards their fellow-man, but, the next, his face was wet with tears at the sorrow around. "How he must have loved the dead man," muttered some, while others thought it strange that one who could open the eyes of a man born blind, should not have been able to keep so dear a friend from dying. They little knew his purpose or his power. Sighing as he went, Our Lord passed on to the grave, which was a small cave, either natural or hollowed out, in the soft limestone of Mount Olivet. I noticed several rock tombs on the under side of the road, not far from Bethany, and went into the largest. It had lain open and empty for ages, and was now green with maiden-

hair fern and other wild growths. There was no place for a body, but simply a space in which more than one corpse could have been laid. Was this the very tomb that had held Lazarus? It may have been. A large stone laid on the opening would have blocked it up entirely, as it did the tomb in which the dead then lay. "Take away the stone," said Christ, to those standing by. "Lord," broke in Martha, "he has been dead four days, and his body must be corrupt before this." A few words from Our Lord, however, removed any unwillingness, and now the dead Lazarus lay there, visible in his white wrappings. Presently the voice of Christ was heard amidst the silence that had fallen on all—"Father, I thank Thee that thou heardest me. And I knew that Thou hearest me always; but because of the multitude which standeth around, I said it, that they may believe that Thou didst send me." Then, with a loud voice, rose the command, so strange when thus spoken into the ear of death, "Lazarus, come forth!" It was enough. Life came back at once to the wasted frame, and it stirred in the grave-clothes which bound it from head to foot. "Loose him," said Jesus, "and let him go." No wonder that many present believed from that moment.

All, however, were not thus softened. Not a few were too embittered against Our Lord for opposing the Rabbis to let the truth have its due effect on them. Hurrying off to Jerusalem they told his enemies, the chief priests and Pharisees, what he had done, and they, fearing the additional influence he would gain by such a miracle, resolved, if possible, to get up some charge against him, on the strength of which they might yet procure his death. Nothing was left, therefore, but that he should once more flee to a safer district, and this he found only on the other side of the Jordan.¹

¹ John xi. 54.

CHAPTER XXVI

JOURNEYING TOWARDS JERUSALEM

WE are not told to what part east of the Jordan Our Lord betook himself at this time, but some of his miracles while he was thus in hiding are related. One day as he was teaching in a synagogue,¹ or Jewish church, on the Sabbath—that is, on our Saturday, a woman who entered, on her way to the part shut off for her sex, drew on her the notice of Our Lord, for she was bent double, perhaps by rheumatism, which is very common in the East. For eighteen years she had not been able to straighten herself. But she was now to be freed from this long suffering. Laying his hands on her, after calling her to him, he quietly said, “Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity,” and forthwith she stood erect, before all, thanking God for his wonderful goodness in curing her.²

To see a poor creature thus made whole might well have given pleasure to all; but some think more of exactness in outward forms than of the spirit of religion. It was Sabbath, and to the narrow-minded ruler, the head man of the synagogue, making the poor woman straight seemed a kind of work, and as such a desecration of the day, on which no one had a right to work. Proud of what he thought his special religiousness, this champion of mechanical orthodoxy could not let the matter pass. “It was very wrong,” said he, “for any one to come on the Holy day to be healed.

¹ Synagogue is a Greek word meaning “a bringing together,” “a gathering,” or “a congregation.”

² Luke xiii. 11–17.

There were six days in which men ought to work. Let them come, therefore, on these and be healed; not on the Sabbath." "He is right," muttered the formalists addressed. "Right!" broke in Our Lord, "you are a set of hypocrites—pretending to be religious but only playing a part. Do you not each loose your ox or ass from the stall on the Sabbath, and lead him away to water? And should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan had bound with disease for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?" There was no answer to this: his enemies could only bear his rebuke in silence; the despised common people rejoicing at their discomfiture and at the proof of God having sent a prophet among them.

Another Passover was now approaching, and Jesus had resolved to go up to Jerusalem once more, knowing that he would die, but freely giving himself up for our good. He went on, therefore, slowly, through the different towns and villages, towards the Holy City, teaching in each as he passed. People of all kinds gathered round, some from honest desire to get good, others from mere curiosity, and not a few with ill-will in their hearts. "Lord," said a hearer, one day, "are they few that be saved?" But Christ gave him, for answer, a caution to strive that he, at least, should not be lost, for many would seek to enter into heaven when it was too late. Nothing would then help them; even if they could say that they had sat at table with him, or heard him teach in their streets. If they did not take heed they would be shut out from the Kingdom of God, while many of the heathen whom they so despised would sit down with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets, in glory.¹

To speak thus of the heathen being put before his race by God was intolerable to a Jew. To hasten Christ's going on, the Pharisees, therefore, hinted that he was in danger, as Herod Antipas, tetrarch of the district

¹ Luke xiii. 23-30,

in which he then was, as well as of Galilee, was seeking to kill him. He had already killed John the Baptist and was no doubt ready to kill Jesus also; but man is immortal till his work is done. "Go and say to that fox," was the only reply—"Behold, I cast out devils and perform cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day my work here will be completed, but till then I must work." He added that he was safe outside Jerusalem, and would die only there, like all the prophets before him. Then bewailing the blindness of the fanatical city, he broke out into a touching lament and reproach—"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. (God will forsake you, and I will no more appear as your Saviour. You shall not see me till I come to set up my Kingdom, and then), ye shall say—as to the Messiah—'Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.'"¹

About this time he accepted the invitation of one of the chief Pharisees to eat with him on a Sabbath, though the courtesy proved no more than a hollow one; the other guests invited showing only too clearly their ill-will to him. The street door always stands open in the East, and it is free to any one to come in, even during a meal. On this occasion a man ill of the dropsy entered, silently appealing to his compassion.² Seeing him, Jesus turned to the Pharisees and teachers of the Law present, and asked whether it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath? They had not the honesty, however, to express any opinion, for though their conscience and natural sympathies demanded an affirmative answer, they might be brought, by giving it, into conflict with the teachings of the Rabbis. Christ, however, always true to what was right, even

¹ Luke xiii. 31-35.

² Luke xiv. 1-6

when apparent self-interest, or public opinion, or the danger of being misunderstood and slandered stood in the way, at once healed the sufferer and sent him home, silencing any remark by the pointed question he had often asked before, whether, if any of them had an ass or an ox which had fallen into a well, he would not straightway draw him up on a Sabbath-day?

The pride and vanity shown by members of the company as they took their places on the dining couches, ere long attracted the attention of Our Lord. Persons invited to a feast should not, he told them, take, of their own accord, the most honourable seats, lest a person of higher position had been invited, to whom they would have to give way. How much better to sit even in the humblest place, that the host might come with an invitation to go higher. A lesson capable of varied use.

To make a feast simply for display, or to entertain those from whom a return was expected, was no less contrary to the ideas of Christ. "Instead of asking to a dinner or supper, your friends, brethren, kinsmen, or rich neighbours," said he, "it would be well to bid the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind, who cannot repay you. If done for love, there will be a blessed reward at the resurrection of the just."¹

Such was the conversation as the meal advanced. At last one of the company, wishing to say something in the same strain, exclaimed, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God," flattering himself and the guests that he and they, at least, were sure to do so. This, however, Christ presently showed was open to question. "The Kingdom," said he, "is like a great feast given by a nobleman, to which large numbers were invited. When the night came, a servant was, as usual, sent out to remind those bidden that the supper was presently to begin. Each, however, was found ready with some excuse. The first had

¹ Luke xiv. 7-14.

bought a field, and could not avoid going to see it; another had bought five yoke of oxen, and was going off to prove them; while a third had no better apology than that he had married a wife, and could not come. Slighted thus, the nobleman, justly indignant, resolved that his preparations, in any case, should not be lost, and ordered his servant to go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor, and maimed, and blind, and lame. Having done so, he was told that there was still room for more guests. 'Go out then,' said he, 'into the highways and hedges, and force the poor creatures you find there to come in, that my house may be filled. For none of those who were bidden shall taste of my supper.'"¹ There was no mistaking the meaning of such a parable. The chiefs of the Jewish Church and their followers had been invited by Christ, the servant sent by God for the purpose, to come to the great feast he had prepared—the setting up among them of the New Spiritual Kingdom he was founding, and they had with one consent refused. But guests would not be wanting. Since they had shut themselves out, God would bring in the common people, the publicans and sinners whom they despised, and even the heathen. Confident that they would sit down in the Kingdom of God with the patriarchs and ancient saints, nothing could have touched such men as the company present more to the quick, than to hear themselves spoken of as giving place to classes whom they regarded as under the curse of God.

A last gleam of popularity was enjoyed by Christ during this journey. Great multitudes going to the feast accompanied him as he went slowly forward to Jerusalem. Some of them even expressed a wish to be his disciples, but he was slow to receive them, knowing the dark future before his followers. "If any one came to him," said he, "who did not, in com-

¹ Luke xiv. 15-25.

parison, hate every earthly tie, and even his own life, he could not be his disciple." He must be willing to go to the cross, if needs were; and indeed his life would be doomed, like that of the unfortunates who had to bear their own cross on their shoulders, on their way to execution. He must, therefore, count the cost before joining him, as a man wishing to build a tower first reckons whether he has the means to complete it, or as a king going to war makes sure that he is able to meet his enemy. Only the cross stood before himself, and his followers could expect nothing better. "If they were sincere," said he, repeating an illustration already introduced in the Sermon on the Mount, "they would be like salt amidst the corruption around; but without perfect sincerity they would be like the salt earth of these parts, from which the rain had washed away the saltiness, so that the earth was good for nothing but to be thrown out."¹

It was touching to notice now, as at other times, that while the self-satisfied were ruffled and soured by the addresses of Christ, the weary and heavy laden, well nigh hopeless for both this life and the next, delighted to gather round him. There must have been something in his looks and bearing, and even in his voice, which, with the sweetness of his discourse, made the wretched feel, by a natural instinct, that he was their friend. That he treated them as men, and did not demand the intolerable slavery imposed by the Rabbis, drew to him the hearts of not a few, till then reckless and desperate in their hopelessness and social proscription. I have already given some examples of the "burden" laid on all by the Law, as expounded by the Scribes, but a few more may be added. Thirty-nine principal forms of work were forbidden on the Sabbath, but under each of these there were countless prohibitions. For instance, it was unlawful to make or untie a knot on the Sabbath, but

¹ Luke xiv. 25-35.

to this there were various exceptions. Thus, while it was unlawful either to tie or untie a sailor or a camel-driver's knot, another, which could be untied with one hand, might be so. A woman might run together a slit in her dress, or tie her shoes or sandals, or the mouth of a skin of wine or oil. A jar could be let down into a well by a rope tied to a sash, but not by one tied to another rope. To write two letters of the alphabet on the Sabbath, either with the left or right hand, whether at once, or separately, or with the same ink, or different, or if the letters were of two languages, was not lawful, nor did it matter on what material the letters were written. Further, it was unlawful to write anything on the two walls of a corner or the two leaves of an account-book, if they could be read together; or upon one's own body: but if one wrote on anything which did not preserve the characters, it was not unlawful; as, for instance, if one wrote on the dust of the road, or on sand, or in fruit juice. But if one wrote with his foot, mouth, or elbow, or if he wrote one letter on the ground and one on the wall, or on two walls of the house, or on two leaves of a book, so that they could not be read together, it was lawful. To carry a handkerchief in the pocket on the Sabbath was sinful, but it might be carried if tied round the waist as a girdle. Similar laws affecting every detail of daily life formed a slavery beyond endurance. The common people could not, of course, observe such a world of rules, and the publicans and "sinners" did not trouble themselves about them; yet whether the "Law" was neglected through ignorance of it or from inability to get time to keep it, or because a man's calling make it impossible to do so, the Scribes and Pharisees admitted no excuse. Jesus, however, had no feeling towards even the worst but pitying love.

"What man of you," he asked, "having a hundred sheep pasturing on the hills, and having lost one of them, does not leave the ninety and nine in the safe open country, and go after that which is lost, until he

find it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing; and when he comes home, calls together his friends and his neighbours, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.' I say to you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repents, more than over ninety-nine too self-righteous to think they have need of repentance."¹

"Or," he went on, "what woman, having ten pieces of silver in her head ornament—and the poorest have that number—if she lose one piece, does not light a lamp in her dark, windowless house, and sweep the floor, and seek diligently till she find her lost coin? And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbours, and says, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost.' Even so, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents."²

Then came the wonderful parable of the Prodigal Son.³ "A certain man," said he, "had two sons. Of these, the younger said to his father, 'Father, give me now, while you are still alive, the portion of your substance which you intend me to have hereafter.' And the kindly father, yielding, divided to his two sons his living. Not long after this, the younger son gathered all together, turning his portion into money as best he could, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there rose a mighty famine in that country; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to one of the heathen citizens of that land; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine; a shameful occupation for any Jew. No one, however, gave him even food; not even his master, so that he envied the very swine the pods of the carob-tree on which they were feeding.

"Such misery, however, ere long, brought him to

¹ Luke xv. 1-6.

² Luke xv. 8-10.

³ Luke xv. 11-32.

serious thoughts, and when he came to himself, he said, 'How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, and I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight; I am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me like one of thy hired servants.' And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight; and am no more worthy to be called thy son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring forth quickly the best robe I have, and put it on him, instead of his rags; and put a ring on his finger, becoming my son, and put shoes on his naked feet; and bring the fatted calf and kill it, for though I would not kill it for any one else, I will do so for him, and let us eat and make merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again: he was lost, and is found!' And they began to be merry.

"Now his elder brother was out in the open field, and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called to him one of the servants, and inquired what these things meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother is come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound.' But he was angry and would not go in; therefore his father came out and entreated him. But he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years do I serve thee, and I have never disobeyed thee, and yet thou never gavest me even a kid, that I might make merry with my friends; but when this fellow came; forthwith, as if he were your only son,—though he has devoured thy living in bad company,—thou killest for him the fatted calf—the greatest honour thou couldst pay any one.'

"But the father said, 'Son, thou art always with me, and all that is mine is thine. It was meet to make

merry and be glad; for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.'"

Such a parable must have cheered the hearts of the poor publicans and sinners, as much as it reproved the self-righteous Pharisees, who, like the elder brother, grudged the returning prodigals the welcome vouchsafed them.

Having thus defended himself for his sympathy with the outcasts of his people, Our Lord presently added a parable to set principles before these classes for their future guidance amidst the temptations of their position.¹ "A certain rich man," said he, "had a steward, to whom he left the charge of all his affairs. After a time, however, this person was declared by some one to be acting dishonestly in his office, and in consequence was called by his master before him, and told what had been said. Orders, moreover, were given him to make out and settle all his accounts, as he could no longer be steward.

"Knowing that he was guilty, the accused man was at a loss what to do. 'I cannot dig,' said he, 'for I have not been accustomed to it, and I am ashamed to beg.' At last he hit on a plan which he thought would serve his end. Going to all his master's tenants, one by one, he asked each how much rent or dues he had to pay, though, in fact, he knew all this beforehand, and told them to make out an account by which they would seem in each case to owe much less. In this way he made sure of friends who would open their houses to him when he had been dismissed.

"When his master heard how cleverly he had secured his own ends, he could not help admiring his shrewdness. And, in truth, it is a fact, that bad men like this steward—the sons of this world, not of the next—are wiser in their dealings with their fellows than the sons of light, my disciples, are in theirs.

"As the master of that steward commended his

¹ Luke xvi. 1-13.

prudence, though it was so worldly and selfish, I commend to you a higher prudence in the things of this life. By becoming my disciples, you have another master than Mammon, the god of this world, whom you have hitherto served, and my service is so utterly opposed to his, that if faithful to me, you cannot be faithful to him. He will, in consequence, take this world's goods from you, as I have often said, and therefore I counsel you so to use the worldly means still at your command, that, by giving them to your needy brethren, my disciples, you may make friends for yourselves, who, if they die before you, will welcome you to heaven after death.

"If thus faithful with the little you have on earth you will be entrusted by God with infinitely more hereafter; for he that is faithful in this world, has shown that he can be entrusted with more, in heaven. If you have proved faithless in the stewardship of the worldly means lent you for a time by God, how can you hope to be honoured with the great trust of eternal life? It is impossible for any man to serve two masters. You must choose between God and Mammon."

Such counsels were received with ridicule by the Pharisees standing round. They were known for their love of money, and it seemed to them ridiculous to advise the rich to use their wealth in making friends for the future world, instead of enjoying it here.

Patient as he was in the endurance of personal wrongs and insults, the indignation of Jesus was roused at such sneers at genuine religion, and he, at once, with calm fearlessness turned upon them.¹

"You hold your heads high," said he, "and affect to be such saints that you judge all men by yourselves.

"Yet God knows how different you are from what you make men believe. Your pretended holiness is an abomination before Him. You explain away the

¹ Luke xvi. 14-18.

commands of His Law when they do not suit you, and thus are mere hypocrites or actors.

“That which Moses and the Prophets announced—that to which all the Scriptures point, the Kingdom of the Messiah—has come. From the time when the Baptist preached, that kingdom is set up in your midst, and many press with eagerness into it. You charge me with breaking the Law; but, so far from doing so, I require that the whole Law, in its truest sense, be obeyed by every one who thus seeks to enter the New Kingdom. Believe me, it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one tittle of the Law to lose its force. But how different is it with you! Take the single case of divorce. What loose examples do not some of your own class supply? what conflicting opinions do you not give on the question? I claim that the words of the Law be observed to the letter, and maintain that any one who puts away his wife, except for adultery, and marries another, himself commits adultery, and that he who marries the woman thus divorced is also guilty of the same crime. Judge by this whether you or I most honour the Law—whether you or I are the safer guides of the people.

“But that you may feel the truth of what I have just said as to the abuse of riches,¹ hearken to a parable.

“There was a certain rich man, who dressed in robes of fine purple—like a prince, and in over-garments of the costliest Egyptian cotton, which only the wealthiest can buy.

“There was also, in the same place, a diseased beggar named Lazarus,² who had been set down, as an object of charity, before the great man’s mansion, where he lay helpless, day after day: so poor that he longed to be fed with what fell from the rich man’s table. But the rich man, though he often saw him, and knew his case, showed him no kindness, and instead of relieving

¹ Luke xvi. 19 ff.

² God (is my) help.

him, and thus making with his money a friend who should help him hereafter, as I advise, had no thought except of his pleasure. The poor man's case was indeed pitiful; he could not even drive away the unclean dogs, which, day by day, came and increased his pain by licking his sores.

"But it came to pass, after a time, that Lazarus died, and was carried by the angels to Paradise, and there laid down next to Abraham, at the feast in the Kingdom of God, with his head on the great patriarch's breast—the highest place of honour.

"Soon after, the rich man also died, and was honoured with a sumptuous funeral.

"He, also, passed to Hades; not, however, to that part of it where Paradise is, but to Gehenna, the place of pain and torment. And there he lifted up his eyes, and saw Abraham far off in bliss, with Lazarus reclining next him on his breast, as his most honoured friend. And he knew them both, and remembered how Lazarus had lain at his gate, and thought of this as a bond between them. 'O Father Abraham,' cried he, in his torment, 'have mercy on my agony, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame.' He would fain make friends with Lazarus now, but could not think of any kindness he had ever shown him, to urge on his behalf.

"Of this Abraham reminded him. 'Son,' said he, 'wonder not that you and Lazarus have such opposite lots here from those you had in life. You, then, had as much happiness as you could enjoy, and you lived only for yourself. Had you used your wealth as a godly man, in doing good to those who like Lazarus needed pity, you would have had good laid up for you now. But you lived only for the world, and the good you chose has been left behind you. You had your portion in your lifetime, and have none here. But Lazarus endured sufferings, and now has none. He bore them patiently, as a child of

God, and is receiving the reward of the poor in spirit.

“‘Besides all this,’ added he, ‘between this happy abode and yours, there is a great space, across which no one can pass, either from us to you, or from you to us, so that it is impossible that you should have any share in our joy, or that we can in any way lessen your pain.’

“Now, for the first time, the rich man saw the full extent of his misery, and its cause. ‘Would that I had acted differently,’ cried he, ‘when in life. Would that, instead of living for myself, I had used my wealth as God enjoined, in blessing the wretched. I should then have been welcomed by Lazarus and such as he, into the everlasting habitations of Paradise!’

“‘But, O Father Abraham,’ he continued, ‘let me be the only one of my race to come into this doleful place. Send Lazarus, I beseech thee, back to earth, to my father’s house, for I have five brethren who live as I lived. It would add unspeakably to my pain if they also came to this abode of woe. Oh! let Lazarus go and warn them of what has befallen me, their brother.’

“‘To escape your sad doom,’ replied Abraham, ‘they must repent, and live godly lives. But for this the Law and the Prophets are the appointed means; let them listen to them.’

“‘Nay, Father Abraham,’ answered the lost one, ‘that is not enough. It did not move me to repentance. But if a dead man returned from the grave and told them how it was with me here, they would be alarmed, and reform.’

“‘You err, my unhappy son,’ said Abraham, closing the scene. ‘It would not move them in the least, for the Scriptures are so fitted to persuade men to repentance, that those whom they do not win to it would not be persuaded even if one rose from the dead.’”

The Rabbis had listened to the parable, but it touched their own failing too pointedly to make them care to continue the conference longer. When they were gone, Jesus noticed that the words and bearing

of his opponents, respect for whom as the teachers of the nation was instinctive with every Jew, had not been without their effect even on his disciples. It was evident, moreover, that the trials and persecutions to come, and the weakness of human nature, would try the loyalty of not a few.

By way of caution, therefore, he warned them on this point.¹ "It is impossible," said he, "to prevent divisions, disputes, and even desertion, on the part of some, in the evil times to come. My Kingdom will, I foresee, suffer from this cause; but it cannot be avoided. Yet, woe to him who thus hinders the spread of the Truth. It were better for him, if, like the worst criminal, he were bound to a heavy millstone and cast into the sea, than that he should cause a single simple child-like soul, who believes in me, to stumble. Take heed that you neither mislead nor are misled! To further my Kingdom when I am gone, strive above all things for peace and love among yourselves. If any one sin against you and turn away from you, rebuke him for his sin; but if he see his error and repent, and come back, forgive him; ay, even if he wrong you seven times in a day, and acknowledge his error and promise amendment as often, you must, each time, forgive him freely."

¹ Luke xvii. 1-4.

CHAPTER XXVII

DAILY LIFE OF JESUS

THE lofty demands of Jesus from his followers had already led them to ask that their faith might be strengthened, and he had urged them to be earnest in prayer as the best means to gain this end. Lest they should grow slack in this, and grow faint-hearted, or give way before trials, he now told them a parable.

"There was in a city," said he, "a judge who neither feared God nor revered man.¹ And there was also a widow in that city who had an enemy from whom she could hope to get free only by help of the judge. So she came often to him, asking him to do justice to her, and maintain her right. But he paid no attention, for a long time, to her suit. At last, however, he could bear her constant coming no longer, and said within himself, 'Though I should do it as my duty, that does not trouble me, for I do not pretend to fear God, and care nothing for man; yet this widow torments me. I shall therefore do what is right in her case for my own sake, for otherwise she will weary me out.'

"So the widow thus obtained her end at last.

"Hear what the unjust judge says! But if men thus get what is right, even from the worst, if they be persevering, how can any one doubt that God, the Righteous One, will give heed to the cry of His saints? Will He not much rather than the judge avenge their wrongs if they fervently pray to Him? He is not wearied with

¹ Luke xviii. 1-8,

their cry, as the unjust judge was with that of the widow; and He will deliver them speedily.”

To one of these days we are indebted for the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican. Jesus had spoken much of prayer, but there was a danger of mistaking the outward form for the substance. To show its true nature he said to his hearers:¹—

“Two men went up to the Temple to pray. The one was a Pharisee, the other a publican. The Pharisee, who had seen the publican enter the Temple with him, got as far from him as possible, and began to pray thus: ‘O God, I thank Thee that I do not belong to the common multitude of mankind whom Thou hast rejected—to the covetous, the unjust, the adulterous. I thank Thee that I am not what so many men are, or what this publican here before Thee is. He knows nothing of fasting or of tithes, but I fast every Monday and every Thursday, and I give the priests and Levites the tenth not only of all I have, but of all I may gain, which is more than the Law requires.’

“The publican meanwhile came no farther into the sacred court than its very edge; for he shrank from a near approach to God. Nor could he dare, in his lowliness, to lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, far less his head and hands, but, bending humbly, smote on his breast in sorrow, saying, ‘God be merciful to me a sinner.’

“The Pharisee had spoken only of his own merits; the Publican uttered no more than a humble cry for mercy.

“Believe me, this publican’s prayer received favour from God, and he returned to his home forgiven and accepted; but the Pharisee went away unblessed. For, as I have often said, every one who thinks well of himself in religious things will be humbled before God, and he who humbles himself will be honoured before Him.”

Among the questions of the day fiercely debated between the great rival schools of Rabbis, no one was more so than that of putting away a wife. One school

¹ Luke xvii. 9 ff.

contended that a man had a right to divorce his wife for any whim; even for her having cooked a dinner badly. The other school, on the contrary, held that divorce could be issued only for immorality. If Jesus pronounced in favour of either school, the other would take offence, and he would be brought into trouble.

Some of the Pharisees, therefore, took an opportunity of raising the question whether it was lawful to put away one's wife, when a man thinks fit, for any cause he likes?

There could be no doubt that Jesus would condemn a custom which was undermining all honour, purity, and love. He had already answered the question fully, in the Sermon on the Mount, but that was long since, and he was now in a different part of the country. It was quite in accordance with the habit of the day to appeal to any Rabbi like him on a disputed point, yet the questioners gained little by trying to entrap him now.

"Have you never read," answered he, "that the Creator made man and woman at the same time, in the very beginning of our race, and gave them to each other as husband and wife?¹ And do you not know that God has said that a son who, before, was under his parents, is to separate himself from his father and mother when he marries, and to form a still nearer relationship with his wife—such a relationship that the two shall become, as it were, one? But since it is God who has joined them thus, divorce is the putting asunder by man of what God has joined together. Marriage is sacred, and we are not to regard it as something we can undo at our pleasure."

To this the objection lay ready, that the Law of Moses was less strict, and this gave them a chance of forcing him either to contradict himself, or to pronounce openly against the great founder of the nation. "If it be so," said they, "how comes it that Moses

¹ Matt. xix. 3-6; Mark x. 2-32.

permitted a man to put away his wife? for you know that he says writings might be given where this was wished, and these dissolved the marriage.”¹

“Moses,” replied Our Lord, “did, indeed, suffer you to put away your wives, to prevent a greater evil, but he did so because in the age in which he lived he could do no more. But it does not follow from this that his action was the original law of the Creator, or that religion now sanctions it. I say, therefore, that whoever puts away his wife, except for impurity, and marries another, commits sin; and whoever marries her who is rightly put away is equally guilty.

This statement swept away for ever the right to treat woman as a mere toy or slave of man, and raised her to her true position. For this nobler position, compared with that granted her in antiquity, she is indebted to Jesus Christ.

When an opportunity offered, the disciples asked fuller instruction on a matter so grave. Customs or opinions, the rightness of which has never before been doubted, are hard to uproot. Hence, even the Twelve felt the strictness of this new law respecting marriage, and frankly told him, that if a man were bound to his wife as he had said, it seemed to them better not to marry.

“With respect to marrying or not marrying,” replied Christ, “your saying that it is good for a man not to do so is one on which men differ. Let him among you who is willing to live single, that he may give himself to my service, do so.” But even his apostles were left free to marry or remain single, as they chose.²

In the South, as in Galilee, mothers of households turned with peculiar tenderness and reverence to the new Prophet. Caring nothing for worthless disputes and questions, they were contented if Jesus would lay his hands on their infants, and utter over them a word of blessing, as the elders did in the synagogues.³

¹ Matt. xix. 7-12; Mark x. 4-12.

² 1 Cor. ix. 5.

³ Matt. xix. 13-15; Mark x. 13-16; Luke xviii. 15-17.

Hence they had been presented already, more than once, before Jesus, and now, on this, his last journey, they were again brought to him that he might put his hands on them, and pray for their future welfare. To the disciples, however, this seemed troubling their Master, and they chid the parents for bringing them. But the feeling of Christ to children was very different from theirs. To look into their innocent eyes must have been a relief after enduring those of spies and enemies.

"Let the little children come to me," said Jesus, "and do not forbid them, for the Kingdom of Heaven is given only to such as have a childlike spirit like theirs." Instead of being too young for his blessing, he saw in their simplicity and innocence the earnest of the character he sought to create in mankind. His disciples must become like them by change of heart and lowly life. Stooping down, therefore, he took them up in his arms, put his hands on them, and blessed them.

The need of this childlike spirit must have been brought home to the apostles by an occurrence in their next day's journey. Starting southwards, on the way to Jerusalem, a young man, whose excellent character had already made him a ruler of the local synagogue, came running after him,¹ and kneeled before him, as was usual before a venerated Rabbi. "Teacher," said he, "I shall greatly thank thee if thou wilt ease my mind. I have laboured diligently to do good works of all kinds ordered by the Law, but I do not feel satisfied that I have done enough; I am not sure, after all, that I shall inherit eternal life. Pray, tell me what special good work I can do to secure this."

"Why do you ask me what is right to do?" answered Jesus. "Your question answers itself. There is only One wholly good—that is, God. If you really would

¹ Matt. xix. 16-30; xx. 1-16; Mark x. 17-31; Luke xviii. 18-30.

enter into life eternal, you must keep the commandments given you by Him."

The young man expected to hear some new injunctions, requiring unwonted pains, and securing correspondingly great merit by their observance. The answer of Jesus was too general to help him in this. He, therefore, asked what commands Christ particularly meant.

To his astonishment, instead of naming some ceremonies or rites as the Rabbis would have done, Jesus simply quoted some of the well-known commandments of the Second Table; "Thou shalt not kill," "Thou shalt not commit adultery," "Thou shalt not steal," "Thou shalt not bear false witness," "Honour thy father and thy mother;" closing the list with the greatest of all: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," which was thus put last, as the one by which he intended to bring the young man to the test.

His upright and honest life brought no blush as he listened, and he frankly replied:—

"I believe I can say that I have strictly kept all these commands. In what respect am I still wanting?"

The question itself showed in what he came short, and that, however sincere in his efforts after such a life as would secure heaven, he had not risen to a due sense of what keeping the commandments implied. Had he seen this, he could not have given such an answer.

Jesus read his heart in a moment, and was won by the honesty of his answer and question. As he looked at him, so earnest, so humble, so admirable in his life and spirit, he loved him. If he could stand the demand that must now be made, he would show that he was indeed a true child of God.

"You lack one thing yet," said Jesus, therefore, "if you really wish to be perfect. Had you understood the commands of God in their depth and breadth, you would not have asked if you could do anything

more than you had done; they would have shown you continually fresh duties. When you ask me to tell you what next to do, it shows that you think only of tasks required, and do not act from the love of good in itself. If you really desire eternal life, go home, sell all you have, and give what you get for it to the poor, and instead of your earthly riches you will have treasure in heaven. Then come to me, be my disciple, and bear your cross after me, as I bear mine."

The demand, great though it seems, was exactly suited to the particular case. He had thought he cared for nothing in comparison with gaining heaven; he could now judge for himself if he had not erred.

It might have been hoped that this counsel would have so roused one thus earnest, that all lower thoughts would have lost their power. The love he had inspired in Jesus must have shown itself towards him in every look and tone; there must have been every desire to attract and win, none to repel.

But, rich as he was, and already a ruler—that is a magistrate—the demand staggered and overwhelmed him. His broad acres and social position, which he must give up, raised a whole army of hindrances and hesitations. He had been touched where weakest, but this was exactly what his repeated request demanded. Why should Jesus have asked less from him than from other disciples? It was, doubtless, harder, for a rich than for a poor man to leave all, but there must, in no case, be room for doubt of the entire sincerity of those admitted as disciples, and this could be tested only by their readiness to sacrifice all to become so. It was less, besides, to demand this, as things were, for discipleship would only too surely involve, very soon, not only loss of all earthly goods, but life-long trials, and even death.

But the world got the better in the young man's heart, and he went away sorrowful. His wide fields, his rich possessions—how could he give them up?

"How hardly shall they that have riches enter into

the Kingdom of God!" said Jesus, as the candidate for discipleship went away, evidently in great distress.¹ "It is easier," continued he, "to use a proverb you often hear, for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God."

The words fell with a perplexing sound on the ears of the apostles. Like all Jews, they regarded worldly prosperity as a mark of the favour of God—for their Scriptures always connected the enjoyment of earthly blessings with obedience to the Divine law.²

"Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the Kingdom of God," repeated Jesus, seeing their uneasiness. "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle³ than for a rich man, who clings to his riches, to enter into the Kingdom of God."

"Who, then, can be saved?" asked some of them.

"With men it is impossible," replied Jesus, fixing his eyes on them, "but not with God; for with God all things are possible. He can bestow grace to wean the heart from riches."

Peter, especially, had listened with deep attention to all that had passed, and had been applying it to the case of his fellow-disciples and himself. When Jesus summoned them to follow him, they had been exactly in the young man's position, though they had not had so much to surrender. They had given up everything for him, at his first invitation—their families, houses, occupations, and prospects. However little in themselves, these had been all they had. Hence it seemed only natural that they should have some of that treasure which Jesus had promised the young man, if he forsook all for his sake. Peter, therefore, now asked Jesus directly what he and his fellow-apostles would have for their loyalty to him?

¹ Matt. xix. 22-30; Mark x. 22-31; Luke xviii. 23-30.

² Deut. xxviii. 1-14.

³ Eastern grain bags are sewn with needles large enough to let rope through their eye.

Knowing the honest simplicity of the Twelve, their Master, instead of chiding this boldness, cheered them with words which must have sounded very grand to Galilean fishermen.

"Be assured that when I shall come again, seated on the throne of my glory, you who have followed me here shall sit, each of you, on his throne, to judge the twelve tribes of Israel. Still more; every one who gives up his brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands, or houses, that he may spread my Gospel and honour my name, will be rewarded a hundredfold. Even in this present life he will receive back again richly all he has left—houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children; for he will find all these among those who believe in me; he will be allowed freely to use their means as his own, and be welcomed by them with brotherly friendship.¹ But, with all this, he will have to bear trouble; yet in the future world he will have a great reward, for there he will inherit everlasting life.²

"But," added he, by way of warning, "do not trust to your having been the first to follow me. For the rewards of the Kingdom of Heaven will be like those given by a householder who had a vineyard, and, needing labourers for it, went out early in the morning to hire them.³ Having found some, he agreed to give them a denarius⁴ a day, and sent them into the vineyard. Going out again about the third hour—nine o'clock—he saw others standing idle in the market-place, and sent them also into the vineyard, making no bargain with them, however, but bidding them trust him that he would give them what was just. He did the same at the sixth and at the ninth hours. Finally, he went out at the eleventh hour, and, finding still others standing about, asked why they had stayed there all the day, idle. 'Because no one has

¹ Acts iv. 32.

² Matt. xix. 27-30; Mark x. 28-31; Luke xviii. 28-31.

³ Matt. xx. 1-16,

⁴ About eightpence-halfpenny.

hired us,' they replied. 'Go ye also into the vineyard,' said he, 'and you shall receive whatever is right.'

"When the evening was come, the lord of the vineyard bade his overseer call the labourers, and pay them all the same sum—the denarius, for which he had agreed with the first. He was also to begin with those who came into the vineyard last.

"When they came, therefore, who were hired at the eleventh hour, they received each a denarius. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; but they also were paid, each, only the same amount. When, however, they saw this, they murmured against the householder, saying, 'Those who came in last did only one hour's work, and thou hast made them equal to us, who bore the scorching wind from the desert at sunrise, and the heat of the day.' But he answered one of them, 'Friend, I do thee no wrong; didst not thou agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours, and go; I desire to give the same to those who came in last, as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will in my own affairs? Is thine eye evil because I am good?'

"The householder thus made the first last, and the last first, because each had alike accepted the offer made them. The Jews had been long in the vineyard and would receive the reward promised them; but if God chose to give the same reward to others, called later on, what wrong did He do to the Jew?

They were now approaching Jericho, from which the road struck west to Jerusalem. Nisan, the month of the Passover, had already come, and only a few days more remained of our Saviour's life. Throngs of people were going up to the Holy City. All around was joy and gladness, but a deep gloom hung over the apostles. They had shrunk from visiting Bethany, because it was near Jerusalem; for they knew that the authorities were on the watch to arrest their Master. It was clear that he was voluntarily going to his death. The

calmness with which he thus carried out his purpose awed them; for, so far from showing hesitation, he walked at their head.

Yet their ideas were sadly confused, and they could not give up the hope that things might result very differently, and that he would, still, establish himself as a great monarch.

He had already told them, twice, exactly what was before him; but to prepare them, if possible, for the shock now so near, he once more repeated what was to happen.

"Behold," said he, "we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of man will be delivered to the chief priests and Scribes, and they will condemn him to death,¹ and then deliver him to the Romans, to mock, and scourge, and crucify, but the third day he shall rise again." Yet in spite of such repeated warnings, not only the Twelve, but the others who followed him, did not understand what he meant. He had said that the apostles would sit on twelve thrones, at his coming in glory, and this had made them think little of the announcement of his death.

Dreams, thus kindled, had risen, especially, in the minds of James and John, who, with Peter, were the most honoured of the apostles. They had been in a better position than many of their brethren, and, with Salome, their mother, had freely given all they had to the cause of their Master. Ashamed to tell him their thoughts directly, they approached him through her, whom, perhaps, he might the more readily hear, as older than they; as a woman; perhaps his mother's sister, and as one who had shown herself, like her sons, his true friend.

She now came, therefore, with them, in secret, and, falling on her knees, as was the custom where reverence was intended, and as was especially due to one whom she regarded as the future Messiah, told him she was

¹ Matt. xx. 17-19; Mark x. 32-34; Luke xviii. 31-34.

about to ask a surpassing favour.¹ "What is it?" asked Jesus. "Say," answered she, "that these, my two sons, may sit, like the chief ministers of other kings, at thy feet, on thy right hand and thy left, on the first step of the throne, when thou settest up thy kingdom."

"You do not understand what your request implies," answered Jesus. "The highest place in my kingdom can only be gained by drinking the cup of sore trial, of which I, myself, shall drink presently, and enduring the same fierce baptism of sorrow and suffering, even to death, in which I am to be plunged. Do you think you are able to bear all that?"

In simple true-heartedness, both answered, at once, that they were.

"You shall, indeed," replied Jesus, "drink of my cup, and be baptized with the same baptism as I; but, in my kingdom, no honours can be given from mere favour, as in kingdoms of the world. They can be obtained only by those fitted for them by true goodness. They are given by my Father to those alone who thus show themselves worthy. For such, indeed, they are prepared by Him already."

John and James had striven to hide their selfish request, by coming to Jesus when he was alone, but the Ten soon heard of it, and were indignant at such an attempt to forestall them in their Master's favour. Their own ambition broke out, afresh, in a storm of jealous passion. Such weakness was sadly out of place at any time among the followers of such a Master, but still more so now, when he stood almost under the shadow of the Cross. Calling round him, therefore, the whole Twelve, offenders and offended, he pointed out how utterly wrong they were in every point of view.

"You are disputing about my Kingdom," said he, "as if it were like the kingdoms of the world. Once

¹ Matt. xx. 20-28; Mark x. 35-45.

more, let me warn you that it is wholly different. He who wishes to be great in it can only be so by becoming the servant of others; and he who wishes the very highest rank, can only be so by becoming the servant of all. You may see that it must be thus, from my own case, your King and Head—for I, the Son of man, came not to be ministered unto, as other kings are, but to serve, and to give up even my life as a ransom for many.”

The upland pastures of Perea were now behind them, and the road led down to the district of Jericho. This small but rich plain was then the most luxuriant spot in Palestine. Sloping gently upwards from the level of the Dead Sea, which is 1350 feet below the Mediterranean, it had the climate of Lower Egypt, and the vegetation of the tropics. Its fig-trees were magnificent; it was famous for its palms; its crops of dates were a proverb; the balsam-plant, which grew principally here, furnished a costly perfume, and was in great repute for healing wounds; maize yielded a double harvest; and wheat ripened a month earlier than in Galilee.

Amidst this landscape, lay Jericho, the chief place east of Jerusalem, seven or eight miles from the Jordan, and seven hundred feet above the river bed. A great multitude from all parts, going up to the Passover, accompanied Jesus as he drew near the city, near the gate of which one of his last miracles was performed. Blindness is remarkably frequent in the East. While in northern Europe there is only one blind person in a thousand, in Egypt one in every hundred is sightless: indeed, very few persons have their eyes quite healthy.

Among the beggars who at this season had gathered on the roadside were two who had lost their sight: only one of whom, however, by name Bar-Timæus, is particularly noticed in the incident that followed.¹

They had probably heard of the cure, at Jerusalem,

¹ Matt. xx. 29-34; Mark x. 46-52; Luke xviii. 35-43; xix. 1.

of the man who had been born blind, and learning now from the crowd, that the great wonder-worker was passing, at once appealed to him as the Son of David—the Messiah—to have mercy on them. The multitude tried in vain to silence them: they only cried the louder. At last, Jesus came near, and, standing still, commanded them to be brought. In a moment their upper garment, which would have hindered them, was cast aside, and, leaping up, they stood before him with their artless tale; that they believed he could open their eyes, and they prayed he would do so. A touch sufficed: immediately their eyes received sight again, and they joined in the throng that followed their healer.

Jericho was the residence of a great many priests; its position as the centre of a very rich district, and the trade between the two sides of the Jordan, made it, also, the home of a strong force of customs and excise collectors or “publicans,” under a local head, named Zacchæus. The transit to and fro of so much wealth brought with it proportionate work and harvest for the farmers of the revenue. To be friendly with any member of a body so hated was not the way to secure the favour of the people at large.

Zacchæus, especially, was disliked and despised, for, though a Jew, he had grown rich by his profession, and was, in the eyes of his fellow-townsmen, not only an extortioner, but, by his serving the Romans, a traitor to his race, and to their invisible King, Jehovah. His personal character, moreover, seems to have been bad, for he owed to Jesus that he had, at least in some cases, wrung money from his fellow-townsmen by swearing falsely against them before the magistrates.

Jesus had seldom passed that way, and hence his person was little known, though report had spread his name widely. Among others, Zacchæus was anxious to see him,¹ and being a little man, had run before the crowd

¹ Luke xix. 2-28.

with which Our Lord was entering the town, and had taken his station in one of the ever-green sycamores—of which some are of great size; a few even fifty feet in circumference. They were easy to climb, from their short trunks, and wide branches forking out in all directions.

He had never seen Jesus; and having no idea that he was known to him, must have been astounded when the Great Teacher, as he passed the spot, looked up, and, addressing him by name, told him to make haste and come down, as he intended to be his guest that night¹ though all others shunned him. The word was enough; in an instant he was in the road, and pressingly welcomed Christ to come to his house. That he, so hated and despised, should have been thus favoured, in a moment won his heart, and waked a new and better life; but it also raised the hostile feeling of the multitude. Voices on every side were heard murmuring that “he was gone (contrary to the Law) to lodge with a publican.”

They little knew the mighty change his doing so had wrought in one hitherto degraded by an ignoble life, and by the contempt and hatred of his neighbours. Christ had completely won him, for he had treated him with respect, and had shown that the way still lay open, even to him, to a new and better life. The two had meanwhile reached the court of the publican's house, and the crowd pressed closely round, as Jesus was about to enter a dwelling hateful to every respectable Jew. He was honouring one whom the Rabbis held to be under the curse of God. Zacchæus felt overpowered with a sense of such unselfish bravery. Standing before the crowd, therefore, he addressed Christ: “Lord, I feel deeply the honour you do me, and I hereby vow that I shall give one-half of my goods to the poor, to show how much I thank thee. And still more, if, as I lament to think has been the

¹ Luke xix. 6.

case, I have ever taken money from any one by false accusation, I promise to repay him fourfold — the highest fine that even Roman law demands from one guilty of such an offence."

"This day is salvation come to this house," said Jesus, as he heard such words, "for this man, sinner though he be, is, nevertheless, a son of Abraham, and now shows himself humbled and penitent. I came to seek and to save that which was lost, and I rejoice to have won back to the fold of God, a child of Israel who had wandered so far from Him."

"Before you leave," he continued, addressing the crowd, "let me tell you a parable. You see that I am near Jerusalem, and suppose I shall take advantage of the Passover, when such vast throngs of Jews are in the Holy City, to proclaim the Kingdom of the Messiah in the way you expect, by insurrection and force. Let me set before you the truth."

He proceeded to repeat a parable¹ borrowed, in many particulars, from facts in their recent national history. Herod's son, Archelaus, had set out for Rome, most likely from Jericho itself, twenty years before, to obtain the kingdom left to him by the will of his father, and the Jews had sent a fruitless embassy after him, to prevent his getting it.

"A certain man, of noble birth," said Christ, "went to a distant country to receive for himself the dignity of king over his former fellow-citizens, and then to return. Before starting, he called ten of his servants, from whom, as such, he had the right to expect the utmost care for his interests in his absence. He proposed, in his secret mind, to trust them with a small charge, by their execution of which he could judge, when he returned, of their fitness and worthiness to be put into positions of greater consideration; for he wished to choose from them his future chief officers.

"In the meantime he gave them, each, only a

¹ Luke xix. 12 ff.

‘pound,’—[worth about three pounds of our money]—and said to them, ‘Trade with this, on my account, till I return.’ If they proved to be faithful in this small matter, he would be able to advance them to something higher.

“It happened, however, that he was so unpopular, that his fellow-citizens sent an embassy after him, complaining against him, and declaring that they would not have such a man to rule over them. But their embassy failed; for, in spite of it, he obtained the province, and was appointed king.

“On his return, after he had thus received the government, he ordered the servants to whom he had given the money, to be called before him, that he might know what each had gained by trading. The first came and said, ‘Lord, thy pound has gained ten.’ ‘Well done, good servant,’ replied his master, ‘because thou wast faithful in a very little, be thou governor of ten cities.’ The second came, saying, ‘Lord, thy pound has gained five.’ ‘Be thou governor of five cities,’ replied his master. But another came, and said, ‘Lord, here is thy pound, I have kept it safely tied up in a napkin; thou wilt find it just as I got it. I did not know what to do with it, and I was afraid of thee; for I know thou art a hard man in money matters, looking for great profits where thou hast laid out next to nothing,—taking up, as they say, what thou hast not put down, and, if needs be, reaping where thou hast not sown,—making good thy loss, if there be any, at his expense who caused it,—and so, to keep myself safe, I thought it best to run no risks one way or other.’

“‘I will judge you out of your own mouth, wicked servant,’ replied his master. ‘You say you knew I was a hard man in money matters, seeking gain where I had laid nothing out to secure it, and reaping where others had sown; why then did you not at least give my money to some exchanger, to use at his table, that thus, on my return, I might have got it back

with interest?' Then, turning to the servants standing by, he continued, 'Take from him the pound, and give it to him that has ten.' 'He has ten already,' muttered the servants, half afraid. But the king went on in his anger, without heeding them: 'I tell you, that to every one who shows his fitness to serve me, by having already increased what I at first gave him, I shall give more; but I shall take away what I at first gave, from him, who, by adding nothing to it, has proved his unfitness to use what might be put in his hands.

"'As to my enemies, who did not wish me to reign over them, bring them hither, and put them to death in my presence.'"

To the Jewish people, who would not receive him as the Messiah, this parable spoke in words of warning alarm; but the Twelve, themselves, heard a solemn caution. They had each received a sacred trust, to be used for his Master's interests. Well for him, who, when his Lord returned to reckon with them, could give a good account of his stewardship; woe to him who had neglected his duty! As to the Jews who rejected him, his coming would be the signal for the sorest judgments.

Having finished his brief stay in Jericho, Jesus set out, once more, on his journey to Jerusalem, going on before the multitude. Many had already gone up to the Holy City, for not a few needed to be there some time before the feast, to prepare themselves to take part in it, by purifications necessary from various causes. Lepers, for example, who had been cured, but were not as yet pronounced clean by the priests, were, with many others, in this position. Great numbers, moreover, we may be sure, went up early for purposes of trade with the first arrivals of pilgrims from abroad.

Meanwhile, all classes alike, in Jerusalem, wondered whether Christ would come to the feast.¹ The excite-

¹ John xi. 55-57.

ment was evident, and increased the alarm of the priests, who were afraid the people would take his part. Orders had therefore been issued that he should be instantly arrested, when found. It was even required that any one who knew where he was should report it, with a view to his apprehension.

In the midst of this commotion, Jesus quietly entered Bethany,¹ on the sixth day before the Passover. It was, however, impossible for him to remain concealed. The news passed from mouth to mouth, and the streets of the village were soon thronged with visitors, who came, not only to see him, but to see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead. For this reason the high-priests began to question whether they could not manage to put Lazarus, also, to death. The sight of him was winning many disciples to Jesus. They would try if they could not destroy him.

¹ John xii. 1, 9-11.

CHAPTER XXVIII

PALM SUNDAY

THE crowd of pilgrims that had accompanied Jesus from Jericho, had been left at Bethany; some pressing on to Jerusalem, others pitching their tents as fancy pleased them, in the pleasant dell below the village, or on the western slope of the Mount of Olives, where they could feast their eyes with a sight of the city. It was the eve of the Sabbath, and that night and the next day were sacred. The journey from Jericho had been exhausting. A steep and narrow bridle-path, threading the precipitous defile, had been the only road. It was the scene of the parable of the Good Samaritan. The khan, or "inn," where the wounded man was sheltered, had been passed half way. Lonely ascents, between bare rocks, with the worst footing, had been left behind only when Bethany and Bethphage,¹ on the eastern spur of the Mount of Olives, came in sight. The journey was over before three in the afternoon, for it was the rule to have three hours of rest before the Sabbath began, at six. In Bethany, Jesus was at home. It was the village of Lazarus and Martha and Mary. The fifteen miles from Jericho had been a continual climb of over three thousand feet; but he could now rest with his friends, through the Sabbath.² Before the next he would be crucified. And he knew it.

This glimpse of sweet rest was the last he would enjoy before the awful end.

¹ Matt. xxi. 1-11, 14-17; Mark xi. 1-11; Luke xix. 29-44; John xii. 12-19.

² Friday sunset to Saturday sunset, 9th Nisan (30-31 March).

In these last months he had more and more openly assumed the dignity of Messiah. Refraining at first from publicly claiming it, he had shunned even the publication of his miracles, that his teaching might get time to root itself and bear fruit among the people, before the opposition of the priests and Rabbis brought his work to a close. He had never, however, refused the title when given him, or the honours from time to time paid him as "the Christ." But till he publicly claimed the awful honour, there still wanted a formal proclamation of his Kingdom. Till then, moreover, the heads of the nation could not be said to have had the choice openly given them to accept him as the Messiah, or finally to reject him.

He determined, therefore, to enter Jerusalem, in such a way as would openly announce his claim to be the Christ—as a king, but as the Prince of Peace, giving no pretence for any complaint by the authorities. He had no longer any reason to conceal from them what he really was.

The bands of pilgrims from the various districts of Palestine, or from abroad, were wont to make public entries into the city before the great feasts. Such an entry Jesus would make, himself its central figure. It would be a day of joy and gladness to him and to others, as when a king begins his reign. He would no longer check the popular feeling in his favour. His last entry to the Holy City, at the Feast of Tabernacles, had been secret; but Israel should now see him come openly, as he, who alone, if they frankly accepted him, could save them yet. He knew beforehand that they would not.

Hitherto he had entered the Holy City on foot; this day, like David and the old kings, he would ride on an ass; the creature on which they had formerly ridden. In the East the ass is in high esteem. The horse had been introduced by Solomon from Egypt, and was used especially for war, but the ass was the emblem of peace. To the Jew it was peculiarly dear, for Moses had led

his wife, seated on an ass, to Egypt; the Judges had ridden on white asses; and the ass of Abraham, the friend of God, was mentioned in Scripture. Every Jew, moreover, expected that the Messiah would enter Jerusalem, poor, and riding on an ass.

On the early morning of Sunday, the tenth of Nisan—the Jewish Monday, Jesus and the Twelve left their hospitable shelter at Bethany, and passed out to the little valley beneath, with its clusters of fig, almond, and olive-trees, soon to burst into leaf, and its ever-green palms. Somewhere near lay the larger village of Bethphage; like Bethany, so close to Jerusalem as to be reckoned legally a part of it. Secret disciples, such as the five hundred who afterwards gathered to one spot in Galilee, and the hundred and twenty, who met, after the resurrection,¹ in an upper room in the Holy City, were scattered in many places. At least one such lived in Bethphage. Jesus, therefore, now sent two disciples thither; telling them that, immediately on entering it, they would find a she-ass tied, and her colt standing by. “Loose them and bring them to me,” said he, “and if any one make a remark, say that the Lord needs them, and they will be sent at once.” He had rightly directed them. The ass and its colt were found, and the permission of their owner—no doubt a disciple—for their being taken for his use was obtained at once.

Meanwhile, it had reached Jerusalem that he was about to enter it, and great numbers of the pilgrims from Galilee, proud of him as a prophet from their own district, set out to meet and escort him, cutting fronds as they came, from the palm-trees that then lined the path, to do him honour. The disciples were no less zealous in his favour, and their enthusiasm was forthwith caught by the crowds around. The former hastily threw a coat on the back of the colt, to deck it for their master, and set him on it, the mother walk-

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 6; Acts i. 15.

ing at its side; while the pilgrims, not to be behind, spread theirs on the road, or cut off the young sprouts from the trees, and strewed them before him. So, myrtle-twigs and robes had been strewn by their ancestors before Mordecai, when he came forth from the palace of Ahasuerus, and so the Persian army had honoured Xerxes, when about to cross the Hellespont, and so it is still sometimes done in Palestine, as a mark of special honour.

There were three paths over the Mount of Olives; on the north, in the hollow between the two crests of the hill; next, over the summit; and on the south, between the Mount of Olives and the Hill of Offence; now superseded by a modern road. Along this Jesus advanced, preceded and followed by multitudes, with loud cries of rejoicing, which took the form of a kind of chant, long used in the early Church as the first Christian hymn:

“Give (Thou) the triumph (O Jehovah), to the Son of David!

Blessed be the kingdom of our Father David, now to be restored
in the name of Jehovah!

Blessed be He that cometh—the King of Israel—in the name of
Jehovah!

Our peace and salvation (now coming) are from God above!

Praised be He in the highest heavens (for sending them by him,
the Son of David)!

From the highest heavens, send Thou, now, salvation!”

It was a wondrous contrast to the triumphal processions of earthly monarchs. No spoils of towns or villages adorned it; no trains of captives destined to slavery or death; the spoil of his sword and his spear were seen only in trophies of healing and love—for the lame whom he had cured ran before, the dumb sang his praises, and the blind, sightless no longer, crowded to gaze on their benefactor. The Pharisees among the multitude in vain tried to silence the acclamations. In their mortification they even turned to Jesus himself, to ask that he should rebuke those who made them. “No,” replied he, “I tell you that,

if these should hold their peace, the very stones will cry out."

As they approached the shoulder of the hill, where the path bent downwards to the north, the sparse vegetation of the eastern slope changed, as in a moment, to the rich green of gardens and trees, and Jerusalem rose before them. Seated on its hills, it shone at the moment in the morning sun. Straight in front were the white walls and buildings of the Temple; its courts, rising one above the other; the steep sides of its hill cased in lofty walls; the sumptuous palace of Herod in its green parks, with its proud castles, and the picturesque outlines of the streets. The crusaders, long centuries after, when the only glory left to the Holy City was its wondrous memories, burst out into a loud cry—"Jerusalem! Jerusalem!"—when they first saw it, and the feelings of the Jew were still deeper.

The whole scene was overpowering even to Jesus himself. He was crossing the ground on which, a generation later, the tenth Roman legion would be encamped, as part of the besieging force destined to lay in ashes all the splendour before him. Knowing the future as he did, his heart was filled with indescribable sadness, for he was a patriot and man, though also the Son of God. Looking at the spectacle before him, and thinking of the contrast a few years would show, tears burst from his eyes, and his disciples heard him saying—"Would that thou hadst known, thou, Jerusalem, in this thy day, when I come, who alone can bring it—what would give thee peace and safety! But now, thou seest not what only could make them thine—the receiving me as the Messiah! Days will come upon thee, when thine enemies will raise a mound about thee, and compass thee round, and invest thee on every side, and level thee with the ground, and bury thy children under thy ruins, and leave not one stone in thee upon another, because thou knewest not the time when God, through me, offered thee salvation!"

Sweeping round to the north, the road approached

Jerusalem by the bridge over the Kedron, to reach which it had to pass Gethsemane. The throngs of pilgrims on the slopes of Olivet, and the crowd at the eastern wall of the Temple, thus saw the procession slowly advancing till it reached the gate, now St. Stephen's, through which Jesus passed into the New Town—riding through narrow streets hung with flags and banners for the feast, and crowded, on the raised sides, and on every roof, and at every window, with eager faces. "Who is this?" passed from lip to lip. "It is Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth, in Galilee," shouted back the northern pilgrims and disciples, proud to honour their province before the sons of Jerusalem.

Leaving his beast, and entering the Temple, after removing his sandals, the crowd with him, who had walked and not ridden, having to stop behind to cleanse their dusty feet, take off their shoes or sandals, and lay aside their walking staves, before entering a place so holy,—he closed the day by a long survey of all around. Earnest, sad hours thus passed; but they were filled with works of pitying goodness, for the blind and the lame had heard of his coming, and hastening to him, were healed. The courts and halls of the Sacred House re-echoed, to the intense mortification of his enemies, with the shouts that had accompanied his entry to the city, the very children joining in the cry of "Hosanna to the Son of David!"

"Do you see how powerless we are against him?" muttered the Pharisees; "the whole people have gone after him."

His bold appearance in the Temple itself filled the priests and Rabbis with indignation, which was all the deeper because for fear of the crowds they dared not arrest him, even when now in their very hands. That the children should hail him as the Messiah, also enraged them. "Hearest thou not what these say?" asked some of them. But he only replied that he did, adding, "Have ye never read in your own Scriptures—'Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, Thou

(Jehovah) hast perfected praise,¹ that Thou mightest put to shame Thine enemies, and silence Thy foes, and those who rage against Thee."

It was now late afternoon. The end proposed had been fully attained. The crowds had begun to retire after evening prayers, and he, too, with the Twelve, passed out among the rest, and betook himself once more to the well-loved cottage at Bethany.

The day in which he had thus virtually given himself up to death was that on which the paschal lamb was selected!

Neither the Twelve nor the disciples at first saw the importance of what had happened. In later times, however, after he had ascended to heaven, they remembered the striking words of the prophet Zechariah, which showed that the triumphal entry in which they had taken part had been the fulfilment of ancient prophecy.²

The events of Palm Sunday, though, for the moment, a bitter annoyance to his enemies, were soon made use of by them to his hurt. His public entry into Jerusalem, as the Messiah, amidst the shouts of the people, seemed to give them, at last, the means of charging him with claiming to be king instead of Cæsar. The Romans dreaded nothing more than any one aspiring to be the Messiah, for it had often cost them dear to quell the insurrections to which it led. But the peaceful bearing of Jesus throughout, the quiet dispersion of the crowds, and the utter absence of anything revolutionary in his whole life and words, were fatal to the hope of getting him put to death as a political agitator. They would not, however, let such an accusation slip, and could accuse him to Pilate, if other charges failed, of "perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that he, himself, is Christ, a king."³

Morning⁴ saw Jesus once more on his way to the

¹ Ps. viii. 2.

² Zech. ix. 9.

³ Luke xxiii. 2.

⁴ 11th Nisan, Sunday sunset to Monday sunset (1st and 2nd April).

Temple. He had not as yet eaten, for he seems to have looked forward to doing so at the home of some disciple in Jerusalem, and the keen air of the early hours made him hungry.¹ The little valley of Bethany was famous for dates and figs; the very name Bethany meaning "the place for dates," while Bethphage is "the place for the green or winter fig"—a variety which ripens only after the leaves have fallen.

It was not yet the time of the fig harvest,² but some of last year's fruit might, perhaps, be found. One tree, especially, attracted his notice. It grew at the roadside, as common property, and, even thus early, when other fig-trees had scarcely begun to show greenness, was covered with young leaves. When he came to it, however, they proved its only boast; there was no fruit. It might readily be used as a type of hypocrisy, which has only leaves. Such a lesson could not be passed in silence by One who drew a moral from everything in life and nature. "Picture of boasts without deeds," said he loud enough for the disciples to hear—"let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever." They were to learn that profession, without performance, found no favour with their Master.

Reaching the city, he once more went to the Temple,³ his Father's house. Two years before, he had purified its outer court from the abuses which love of gain had brought in, under the pretence of serving the requirements of worship. Since then they had been restored in all their hatefulness. The lowing of oxen, the bleating of sheep, the cries of the money-changers, and the noisy chaffering of buyers and sellers filled the air with sounds which had no right in these sacred bounds. The scene roused the same deep indignation, as when he formerly saw it, and the same zeal again dismayed opposition. His command sufficed to clear the spacious court of its motley crowd: the sellers of doves, at his

¹ Sunrise on Monday morning, 5.49 A.M.

² Matt. xxi. 18, 19; Mark xi. 12-14.

³ Matt. xxi. 12, 13; Mark xi. 15-19; Luke xix. 45-48.

order, bore off their cages; the exchangers gathered up their coin, and while he made the one remove their benches and counters, he overturned the empty booths of the others. Nor would he suffer laden porters and others to shorten their journeys by crossing the Temple spaces, as if they were public streets. They might carry them round by what way they chose, but must not make a thoroughfare of the sacred courts. "Jehovah has written," said he, "My house is the house of prayer for all nations, but ye have made it a den of thievish traders."

The importance of such an act to himself, was known to none better than to Jesus. He felt that his hour had come, and that he would perish, a martyr to his fearless attacks on whatever was wrong. He knew that he had against him the vast power of the priests and Rabbis, who posed as the champions of religion, and thus won support from unthinking thousands, and that he must be put down if his enemies were to stand. But, in the face of all this, he went forward calmly.

The day, which had begun with the cleansing of the Temple, was given, in its later hours, to teaching all who would listen. The people, thronging the outer Temple court where he sat—were greatly moved by his words; so new, so earnest, so searching and practical. It was vain to attempt to arrest him while he was thus in favour, for the people rallied to hear him, and no one knew how far they might be disposed, with their fiery Eastern natures, to rise on his behalf, if he were seized.

This day, therefore, passed as safely for him as the last, and in the evening Bethany once more received him. He had entered the city with loud rejoicings, but he felt it wise to retire unnoticed. Leaving therefore by the flight of steps to the Kedron, he crossed Olivet with only his disciples.

Next morning¹ found him once more on the way

¹ 12th Nisan, Monday sunset to Tuesday sunset (April 2-3).

to the Temple. "Rabbi," exclaimed Peter, in wonder, as they passed the tree on which Jesus had sought figs the day before, "The fig-tree which thou cursedst is withered away!"

"See," replied he, "that you learn from this tree to have firm trust in God. Believe me, if you have strong enough faith, you will be able hereafter to do not only such things as you have seen done to this tree, but—to use the expression you so often hear from the Rabbis, when they speak of overcoming the greatest difficulties, or achieving the most unlikely ends—you will be able, as it were, to bid this mountain rise and cast itself into the sea. He who has child-like trust in God, may confidently expect his prayers to be heard. When you pray, believe that prayer is, in very deed, answered, and your faith will be honoured by God granting what you seek; since as His children and my disciples, you will ask only what is in keeping with His will. But when you pray, you must have no anger or revenge in your hearts, else you will not be heard. You must, beforehand, have forgiven all who have injured you. For how can you hope that your Father in heaven will forgive your sins against Him, if you do not forgive offences against yourselves?"¹

But the moments were precious, for his hours were numbered. Each morning saw him in the Temple, as soon as it was opened. He would devote even his last hours to teaching.

He had not been long instructing the people, before some of the Temple authorities arrived, determined to bring him to account for his act of the day before, and for assuming to teach as a Rabbi, without any licence from the schools.² They seem to have been sent officially, and consisted of some of the higher priests—heads of the different courses—some Rabbis, and some of the "elders" or representatives of the

¹ Mark xi. 20-26. ² Matt. xxi. 23 ff.; Mark xi. 27 ff.; Luke xx. 1 ff.

people. Interrupting Jesus as he taught, they abruptly asked him by what authority he acted as he did.

They doubtless hoped he would claim Divine authority, and that they might, thus, have ground for a charge against him. But he was not to be snared. He showed himself ready to turn defence into attack. Instead of answering their question, he asked one in his turn. "Before I answer you," said he, "let me ask you—did John the Baptist act by direction of God or not?" To be themselves questioned, in turn; to be forced to give a reply, instead of listening to one, was annoying; but the question itself was still more so.

Yet, what could they do, for it was clear that John had been a noble servant of God. To own that he was so, however, would bring on them the crushing retort, "Why then did you not believe what he said respecting yourselves, and what he said of me? for his witness, alone, is enough to prove that I come from God." On the other hand, to call him an impostor was dangerous, for the people regarded him as a national hero, the last of the prophets. They therefore only replied that they could not tell whether John's mission was from God or not.

"If so," said Jesus, "then clearly he did not need your sanction, since you never thought it worth while to decide respecting him, and you can have no claim to authorize me, or to withhold authority from me. I decline therefore to tell by what authority I act."

He had silenced his opponents, but would not let them leave without once more trying to open their eyes to their false position.¹

"Let me tell you a parable," he continued. "A certain man who had two sons, came to the first and said, 'Son, go work to-day in the vineyard.' But he answered, 'I will not;' yet afterwards, he repented and went. The second, however, on receiving the same command, at once said he would, but did not go.

¹ Matt. xxi. 28-32.

Which of the two, do you think, did the will of his father?"

The question was so framed that they could give no answer except the one which Jesus required for his complete justification, and their own condemnation. Hardly seeing what it implied, they readily answered, "The first." They were now in his hands. "You say rightly," replied he, "for when John came calling you, in the name of God—you priests, Scribes, and elders—to repentance and righteousness, you honoured him by ready professions and smooth compliance, but after all, you have not kept your word. You are the second son, who said, Yes, but did not go into the vineyard.

"On the other hand, the publicans and harlots and the common people, whom you reckon accursed, though they had refused to obey God, and had even gone to the utmost in sin, repented at the summons of John, and sought earnestly to enter into the Kingdom of God. They, therefore, condemn you, O ye leaders of the people; for, by your own showing, they have done the will of their Father in heaven, but you have not.

"It has, indeed, been always the same. As ye would not hear John, but persecuted him to the death, so have both you and your fathers done in all generations. You, indeed, are more guilty than they all, for you seek to do even worse. Hear another parable.

"A certain man planted a vineyard and set a hedge about it, and hewed out a cistern in the hill-side, in which to press the wine, and built a tower for the watchers, to guard the vineyard, and agreed with husbandmen to work it on his behalf, and went into a far country for a long time. And when the fruit season drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive for him his fruit.¹ But they took them, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third. He then sent other servants, more numerous than the first; but the husbandmen treated

¹ Isa. v. 1 ff.; xxvii. 2; Matt. xxi. 33-46; Mark xii. 1-12; Luke xx. 9-19.

them as badly, for they beat one, cast stones at another and wounded him in the head, and sent him away not only empty-handed but shamefully treated. Some of the rest they beat, others they killed, and they refused to pay the fruits they owed.

"Having yet, therefore, a son—his only and well-beloved,—he determined to send him to them, thinking that, though they had treated his servants so badly, they would be sure to show his son respect. But instead of this, when they saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the son, come, let us kill him, and the vineyard, which he should have inherited, will be ours.' So they took him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.

"Let me ask you now, what will the lord of the vineyard do to these husbandmen?"

The dignitaries thus addressed could not, in the presence of the crowd listening to all that had passed, refuse the only possible answer. "He will come and miserably destroy these wretched men," said their spokesman, "and give the vineyard to others, who will render him the fruits in their season." The meaning of the parable had already flashed on the minds of some of them, and the answer was followed by a deep "God forbid!" from several voices.

Looking steadily at them, Jesus now kept them from retiring by a further question.

"Did you never read in the Scriptures," said he, "this text, 'The stone which the builders rejected is made the chief corner-stone—the main foundation; Jehovah hath done this; marvellous it is in our eyes'?"¹

The meaning was clear. The corner-stone was, in their own mode of speech, only a figurative name for the Messiah.

"You know this verse, do you not?" continued Jesus. "Well, then, because you have rejected me, the stone

¹ Ps. cxviii. 22; Matt. xxi. 42.

chosen by God as the foundation of the Kingdom of the Messiah, it shall be taken from Israel, and from you, its present heads, and given to a nation who will render to God the fruits He has a right to claim from them."

The first open attempt at violence followed this parable. The priests and their party felt that they were meant, and that Jesus had dared to call himself the chief corner-stone of the future Kingdom of God, which was to rise in the place of that with which all their dignities and interests were bound up. With wild Eastern frenzy they sought to arrest him on the spot. But the crowd around would not permit him to be taken, counting him, if not the Messiah, at least a prophet.

Left in peace, he once more calmly betook himself to his task of teaching all who would hear.

The die had finally been cast, and the open breach between him and the Jewish authorities had been shown in his last parables. Indignant at the hypocrisy and wilful blindness of his adversaries, and filled with compassion for the multitude, the thoughts which the last hours raised in his soul found expression in additional parables.

"The Kingdom of Heaven," he began, "is like a king who made a marriage-feast for his son,¹ and sent forth his servants, as the custom is, to tell those who had already been invited that the time had now arrived. But, though once and again summoned, they would not come. Yet, the king, unwilling, in his goodness, that they should not enjoy the feast; in spite of this, sent other servants to invite them again. 'Come,' ran his message, 'for I have prepared the first meal of the feast; my oxen and fatlings have been killed, and all things are ready: come to the marriage.' But they made light of this fresh invitation as well, and went off, one to his farm, another to

¹ Matt. xxii. 1-14.

his merchandise, while still others took his servants and ill-treated and even killed them. Then the king was angry, and sent his soldiers, and destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. Meanwhile, he said to his servants, 'The marriage feast is ready, but those who have been called were not worthy. Go, therefore, to the highways, where the roads cross and there are most passers-by, and invite to the feast as many as ye find.'

"So the servants went forth from the palace of the king, to the roads and cross-ways, and gathered together all, both evil and good, who were willing to accept their invitations, and the feast-chamber was filled with guests.

"But, now, when he came in to welcome them, he saw among them a man who had not paid him the respect of putting on a fitting robe. 'Friend,' said he to him, 'how is it that you have come in hither without a marriage garment? You must needs have known that to slight me in this way is to show me the worst affront.'¹

"But the man was speechless, for he could not excuse himself.

"Then said the king to his attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and cast him out into the thick darkness outside.'

"Ye know," added Jesus, "how dark our streets are in the night; no windows opening on them, and no lights illumining them. That darkness is like the awful night into which he will be cast out who appears at the marriage feast of my kingdom, hereafter, without the marriage-robe of true godliness. In that darkness there will, indeed, be weeping and gnashing of teeth, for though multitudes are invited to the feast of the heavenly kingdom, many neglect the marriage-robe, without which no one can see the king!"

¹ Matt. xxii. 13.

CHAPTER XXIX

TUESDAY IN HOLY WEEK

It was still Tuesday, and Jesus had not yet left the Temple courts.¹ The Temple authorities had come to him in the early morning, only to go away mortified and silenced; all fancying their interests were threatened by the new teaching. However opposed therefore at other times, they now made common cause in trying to get the hated reformer into their power.

Plot thickened on plot. The priests having failed, some of the Pharisees were sent, in company with Herodians, their deadly enemies, to entangle him by answers he might give to treacherous questions. Obscure men, unknown to Jesus, were chosen. They were to pretend themselves anxious, as sincere Jews, to get his counsel on a point much disputed.

Both these parties, though on different grounds, were equally disloyal to Rome. The extreme Pharisees had become its bloodthirsty enemies;² the Herodians were Jewish royalists, who sighed for the old days of Archelaus and the dynasty of the Herods. They now united to tempt Jesus, if possible, to some rash opinion on the payment of the Roman poll-tax, which had already excited fierce insurrections. If he held that payment should be refused, he would offend the Romans; if he allowed it, he would set both Herodians and Pharisees against him. Danger lay on each hand.

¹ Matt. xxii. 15-22; Mark xii. 13-17; Luke xx. 20-26. 12th Nisan, Monday at sunset to Tuesday at sunset (2-3 April).

² *Jos. Ant.* xviii. 1, 1.

On the one, the fierce eyes of the multitude; on the other, the party of the Herods; here, the cry, "Publicans, and sinners"; there, a Roman dungeon.

"Teacher," said they, with soft accents and humble looks, "we know that thou teachest what God requires of man in all matters, truly and rightly, and troublest not thyself about the opinions of men, but fearlessly and nobly speakest what truth demands, without caring who hears thee, whether rich or poor, learned or simple, powerful or lowly. Is it lawful for us Jews to pay tribute to Cæsar, or not? We are the people of God; God is our King; is it in accordance with the duty we owe Him, as such, to own any other king, as we must do if we pay taxes to Cæsar?"

This mode of approach was well fitted to throw Jesus off his guard. Frankness demanded frankness. The courage of the question called for as much in the reply. Jesus knew, besides, that such ideas were active in the mind of the Pharisee youth, and that the Herodians, instead of being friends of Rome, anxiously desired a change. Why, therefore, should he distrust the new allies? The strict Jew recognised no ruler but Jehovah, and since Jesus had devoted his life to founding a "Kingdom of Heaven," it seemed only natural that he should hold his followers free from obligations to Rome.

But Christ's answer scattered their plans to the wind.

"You hypocrites!—you actors!" replied he; "I see through your designs, and value your flatteries at their worth. Why do you thus seek to entrap me? Bring me the coin you pay as the Roman tax." A denarius was presently brought him—a coin which the Jew hated intensely, for it was that in which the poll-tax was paid, and was, thus, the sign of slavery to the heathen. The emperors, till Vespasian's time, to spare Jewish feeling, had a special coinage for Judea, without a likeness on it, but only the name of the emperor and some Jewish emblems. Other coins, however,

stamped with the image of Augustus or Tiberius, found their way to Jerusalem, especially at the feasts. Such a piece was now handed to Jesus, with the hope, doubtless, that the image on one side, and the signs of Jewish subjection on the other, might provoke him to some treasonable expression.

"Whose image and inscription is this?" asked he.

"Cæsar's."

"Render then to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's."¹

Nothing could be said after such an answer. The head of the emperor on the coin, and the words round it, were proofs of the existing state of things, and, thus, of the right of the imperial government to levy taxes, and of the duty to pay this one. "But," added he, "your duty to God is as binding. Pay also what you owe Him as your spiritual King, the Temple tax and all that He asks besides." The question was thus answered with a clearness and wisdom which could not be surpassed.

Such a reply was not only not treasonable, but pressed on the nation the discharge of its duties to Rome.

All the Jewish parties had now united against Christ as a dangerous reformer and an enemy of the legal forms and rites which were the essence of the religion of the day. If tolerated longer he might win over the people. The Pharisees and Herodians had hardly left him when some Sadducees, a small body, which held all the highest offices in the priesthood, though they believed neither in the future life nor in the resurrection, nor in spirits,² renewed the attack. All ranks, from the highest to the lowest, were thus against him. His support was among the people. His appearance in the Temple, his exercising authority in it, and his lofty claim to be the Messiah, filled the official world with alarm, and united them to crush him. But the Sadducees had none of the earnestness of the Pharisees.

¹ Matt, xxii. 15 ff.; Mark xii. 13 ff.; Luke xx. 29 ff.

² Acts xxiii. 8.

The primate and bishops of the day—they affected at first only to despise the Galilean, who, like so many before him, had stirred up commotion for the time. Even now, in Jerusalem, they were disposed to look at him and his followers with a lofty contempt, and to laugh at the foolish rabble who listened to him. His claims were, in their opinion, more silly than dangerous, and they would, therefore, bring the whole matter into contempt, by making it ridiculous.

For this end they had carefully selected, from the cases invented by the Rabbis, that of a wife who was supposed, in accordance with the Mosaic law, to have married in succession seven brothers,¹ each of whom died without children. It was a possible case, and the Law enacted that, if a husband died without leaving a son to perpetuate his name, his brother must marry the widow, and the first-born son of the second marriage was to be entered in the public register as the son of the dead man.²

Not themselves believing in the doctrine of the resurrection, and supposing that Jesus, who, they had heard, taught it, held the same notions as they ascribed to the Pharisees, they fancied they could cover him and it with ridicule, by a skilful use of this case. Some of the Rabbis, indeed, had purer conceptions than others, teaching that in the kingdom of the Messiah, after the resurrection, or at least in the future world, the just would neither eat, drink, nor marry. But the popular belief, as expressed by the Rabbis generally, was gross and unworthy in the extreme. The resurrection would not only restore men to their former bodies, but to their appetites and passions; they would not only eat, drink, and take wives, but would rise in the clothes they wore in life, if buried with them, and with all their bodily blemishes and defects, “that men might know them to be the same persons as they knew in life.” Even the case supposed by the Sadducees

¹ Matt. xxii. 23-33; Mark xii. 18-27; Luke xx. 27-40.

² Deut. xxv. 5.

had been settled,—“for the woman who had married two husbands in this world,” it was said, “in the world to come will be given to the first.”

Coming to Jesus, with a well-bred politeness, they put their question softly, addressing him respectfully as “Rabbi.”

“Your ideas respecting these things are wrong,” replied Jesus, “from your not understanding correctly the Scriptures which refer to them. The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage. But those who shall be counted worthy to enter the Heavenly Kingdom, and will be raised from the dead to do so, neither marry nor are given in marriage, neither can they die any more, for they will be immortal, like angels; and hence there is no reason for their marrying and raising children to take their place, as with men in this world. As sons of the resurrection, they are sons of God, and, like the angels, they will live for ever.

“As to the resurrection of the dead, even Moses shows, in the passage in which we are told of the vision at the burning bush, that the dead are raised. For he calls Jehovah, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Now, God cannot be the God of persons who do not exist, and, therefore, the patriarchs, though their bodies were dead, must themselves have been still living and awaiting the resurrection. Thus, God regards all the dead as still alive, and, if this be the case, how easy for Him to raise them hereafter!”

“Rabbi, thou hast spoken well,” said some Scribes, as he closed. They were, for the moment, won to his side by his triumph over the Sadducees. Meanwhile, the people were more than ever astonished at his teaching, and disposed to think him a prophet.

It soon spread abroad that the Sadducees had been silenced, but the Pharisees had already prepared a new attempt to entrap him.¹ One of them who had

¹ Matt. xxii. 34-40; Mark xii. 28-34.

listened to the dispute—a Scribe, or master of the Law—had been selected to be their spokesman, but, as it proved, was only half hearted in his task. The Rabbis taught that there were great and small commands—the one hard and weighty, the other easy and of less moment. Their idea of greatness, however, was fixed by their own fanciful rules. Thus, commands were especially called great, to the transgression of which excommunication was attached; such as observance of the Sabbath in their sense, of circumcision, of the minutest rites of sacrifice and offering, of ceremonial purity, and the like. The precepts respecting the structure of the booths at the Feast of Tabernacles, and of the washing of the hands, were, on the contrary, counted small. But, in spite of this difference, obedience to all was alike required, and in practice, both classes were treated as equally weighty. To honour one's parents and to let a mother-bird fly when the young are taken; not to kill; and to wash the hands, were put on a level, and had an equal reward. Even the injunctions respecting the tassels at the corners of their scarves, were "great." Any answer of Jesus on a subject so delicate, might perhaps expose him to new charges.

His reply, as always, goes to the root of the matter. He avoided the least approach to anything that could offend the most zealous faith in Scripture, and, at the same time, gave no ground for accusing him of any slight of the legal rules they so greatly honoured.

"Teacher," said the Scribe, "which is the first and great commandment in the Law?"

No one could take Jesus by surprise at any time, but here he was, if we may so speak, especially at home, as he had shown a few days before, in his conversation with the young ruler near Jericho. Conscious of the peril of his position, he answered with more fulness than usual, making his opinion quite clear, but giving no pretext for offence. To the young ruler he had named only one command—the love of

our neighbour—as great, but to the Scribe he gave two, as forming together, “the great and first commandment.” With sure hand, he turned first to the fifth book of Moses, then to the third, for the two great guiding stars which all the lesser commands followed. “Hear, O Israel,” said he: “Jehovah, our God, is one Jehovah”—words in which every Israelite, night and morning, confessed his faith—“And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.¹ This is the first and great commandment. The second is like it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.² There is none other commandment greater than these. On these two hang all the Law and the prophets.”

He had once more shown his greatness as a teacher, by summing up our whole duty in love to God, which is also love to His children, our fellow-men. Nor were the commands of any part of the Scriptures overlooked in this answer; the religious and moral precepts of the prophets, no less than of the Law, were honoured and made binding for ever.

“Thou hast spoken well and truly,” broke in the Scribe, “for God is One, and there is no other but He, and to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbour as one’s self, is of greater consequence than all the whole burnt-offerings of the Law, the morning and evening sacrifice, and all other sacrifices besides.”

“Thou art not far from the kingdom of God,” replied Jesus, as he heard words which showed that the speaker was no mere man of his party. The answer of Christ had not only silenced his enemies, but had half won some of them to his side. Henceforth, all alike kept aloof from one who sent away chief priests and Rabbis equally humbled and silenced.

¹ Deut. vi. 4, 5.

² Lev. xix. 18.

As on the day before, the defeat of all the attacks on him was followed by his taking the offensive.

Turning unexpectedly to a knot of Pharisees, who hung near, to watch as he was teaching, he asked them¹—

“What is your opinion about the Messiah—whose son is he?”

“The Son of David,” answered they at once.

“How is it, then,” replied Jesus, “that David, in the hundred and tenth Psalm, which you justly refer to the Messiah, says, ‘The Lord said unto my Lord, the Messiah, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? Thy mighty sceptre will the Eternal stretch forth out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thy foes.’ If he be David’s Lord, how can he be also his son?”

Not knowing what to say, they were silent. The true answer was one which had not entered their thoughts. It would have been—he is David’s son by his human descent, but, as the Son of God, he is exalted far above David and all mankind, and therefore was rightly called by David, his Lord.

A new scene now opened. Day after day the hostility of his enemies had shown itself more fierce, as they found it increasingly hopeless to overcome him by argument. The people, however, were more friendly, and regarded him as at least a prophet. He had hitherto maintained only a defensive attitude, but the clear purpose shown to put him out of the way made all further reserve or caution useless.

He now, therefore, broke out, before the multitude in a last terrible denunciation of the moral and religious shortcomings of his enemies. These he summed up under the two great heads of hypocrisy and selfishness; they made a pretence and a gain of religion. Yet their doctrines were mostly right; it was their practice he condemned.

¹ Matt. xxii. 41-46 ; Mark xii. 35-37 ; Luke xx. 41-44.

"The Scribes and Pharisees," said he, "fill the seat of Moses, continuing his office as law-giver, by explaining and teaching the Law.¹ They are his successors; therefore obey their decisions. But do not imitate their lives, for they teach what they do not practise. They heap together their rules and demands into heavy burdens, and lay them on men's shoulders, but they will not help those whom they thus load, by so much as the touch of a little finger. They shirk many rites and forms which they demand from others as sacred duties. To exalt their order they make slaves of the people. They themselves act only with an eye to effect; to be thought more religious than others, and reap consideration and profit. They come out to pray in their most pious robes, especially now, at the feast, and wear phylacteries² of extra size on their forehead and arm, that they may be noticed; while the very tassels hung, in honour of the Law, at the corners of their scarves, are larger than those of others. To get honour, they strive for the highest places at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and court salutations in the crowded market-place, and the sounding title, Rabbi. Have nothing to do with such proud names, for I, only, am your Rabbi, or teacher, and all ye are brethren. They like to be called 'Father,' but call no teacher on earth your father, for one only is your Father; God, in heaven. And do not, like them, be called leaders, for you have only one Leader, me, the Messiah. The highest place among my disciples is quite otherwise obtained than among them, for he who seeks to be great among you can become so, as I have said before, only by being the servant of the rest. For he who exalts himself shall be humbled at my coming, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

¹ Mark xii. 38, 39; Luke xx. 45, 46; Matt. xxiii. 1-12.

² Phylacteries, or protectors, were small leather boxes with texts on them, tied by leather bands on the forehead and the arm. See illustration, p. 156.

Rising, as he proceeded, he now broke out into indignation at his enemies.

“Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, actors! Ye plunder the houses of desolate widows, left without protectors, and to hide your doings make long prayers!¹ For you say in your hypocrisy, ‘Long prayers make a long life,’ and some of you boast that you pray nine hours a day! Believe me, you will receive for all this the greater condemnation hereafter.

“Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, actors! Ye stand in the gate of the Kingdom of Heaven—that Kingdom I have come to set up—and not only do not yourselves enter; you even close the doors I have opened, that you may keep those from entering who wish to do so.

“Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, actors! Instead of helping men into the Kingdom of the Messiah, ye compass sea and land to make one convert, that your party may profit by him, and when he is gained, what do you make of him? A son of hell, by your example, and that twofold more than even yourselves.

“Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘If any one swear by the Temple, it is not binding; but if he swear by the gold which belongs to the Temple—the gilding, the golden vessels, or the treasure,—he is bound by his oath.’ Fools and blind! for which is greater, the gold, or the Temple that makes the gold sacred? You say, in the same spirit, ‘If any one swear by the altar, his oath is not binding on him; but if he swear by the gift that he has laid on the altar, he must keep his oath. Fools and blind! for which is greater, the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred? He who swears by the altar, swears by it and by all the things on it; and he who swears by the Temple, swears by it and by Him that dwells in it. And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it.

¹ Matt. xxiii. 13–39; Mark xii. 40; Luke xx. 47.

“Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, actors! for ye affect to be so strict in observing the Law that you pay to the Temple a tenth of even the sprigs of mint and anise and cummin in your garden borders, and yet at the same time neglect the great commands of the Law,—to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God. Attend to the lighter demands of the Law, but beware of leaving the far greater neglected. Blind guides, who strain out the gnat from the wine and swallow a camel! Sticklers for worthless trifles, regardless of matters of moment.

“Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, actors! Ye make clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but, within, they are full of robbery and lust. Blind Pharisees, clean first the inside of the cup and dish, that the wine taste no more of plunder and vice, and that the outside may not only seem clean by your washing, but *be* clean, by your better life.

“Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, actors! You are like the whitewashed tombs all over the land—fair outside, but full, within, of foul uncleanness, the bones of men, and all corruption. You pass yourselves off as religious, but in your heart you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.”

Over against the eastern hall in which Jesus now stood, and from which he looked down into the Valley of the Kedron, lay, on the slope of the Mount of Olives, the so-called tombs of the Prophets, the southernmost of which is yet known as the tomb of Zechariah. In sight of these monuments, glancing his eyes from grave to grave, he burst out afresh—

“Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, actors! Ye build fine tombs over the old prophets, and beautify those of the saints, and say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in the martyrdom of these holy men.’ But when you call their murderers ‘your fathers,’ you bear witness that you are their sons, not only in natural descent, but in spirit. You are of kin in heart to them! Fill up,

therefore, the measure of their iniquity by slaying me and those I shall send to you! Serpents! brood of vipers, for vipers your fathers were, and vipers are ye; how can ye escape the judgment of hell! That ye may not do so, behold, I send to you prophet-like apostles, and rabbis and scribes. Some of them ye shall kill and crucify; some ye shall scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city—that on you, the leaders of the people, may come the punishment of all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of Abel to that of Zechariah,¹ the son of Berechiah, who was stoned by command of King Joash, in the court of the Temple, between the shrine and the altar. Believe me, all these things will come on this generation.

“O Jerusalem! Jerusalem!” he continued, “that killest the prophets, and stonest those sent in love to thee: how often have I desired to gather thy children as a hen gathers her chickens under her wing, and ye refused to accept my invitations. Behold, your house is left to you desolate! I go from it. The time of the Divine help and guard over you and your city, which I was sent to offer, is past.

“I tell you ye shall not see me henceforth, after my death, which is near at hand, till I appear again in glory. Then you will be only too ready to honour me, though now ye refuse even to let others do so. Then, when too late, ye will cry, as the crowds did as I entered your city, ‘Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.’”

The breach between Christ and his enemies was now complete. The whole Church-world, from the high-priest its primate, to the Levite its curate, and the Rabbi its professor or tutor, had been denounced before the people. Either Jesus, or the Church as it was, must perish.

¹ 2 Chron. xxiv. 20.

CHAPTER XXX

TUESDAY IN HOLY WEEK (*continued*)

AFTER this terrible parting attack on the religious leaders of the nation, Jesus passed into the spacious Court of the Women, fifteen steps below that of the men. It was a wide space of about two hundred feet in length and breadth, and was open to the people at large. Popular assemblies, indeed, were at times held in it, and it was the scene of a torch-dance at the Feast of Tabernacles. It was especially frequented, moreover, by both sexes, because the building in which the pious presented their offerings formed part of one of its sides.

After the excitement of the past hours, Jesus had sat down against the treasury, where those who cast in their money into it were in full view. The poor could only give paltry copper coins, but the rich cast in gold and silver; not a few, doubtless, from an honest zeal for the glory of God had their value in the future world.

Among the rest came a poor widow, with two lepta, the smallest of copper coins;¹ the two making one-twelfth of our penny. She could not have cast in less, for one lepton was not received as an offering. "Believe me," said Jesus, to those around him, "this poor woman has cast in more than any one, for they have only given of their abundance, but she in her need—for she has less than enough—has thrown in all she had for her day's living."

¹ Mark xii. 41-44; Luke xxi. 1-4.

Among the multitude of pilgrims, then in Jerusalem, were many foreign proselytes. The spread of the Jewish population to all countries had resulted in great numbers of heathen accepting what were called the seven commands of Noah—the avoidance of murder bloodshed, or robbery; obedience to the Jewish courts in matters of religion; the rejection of idolatry, the worship of Jehovah, and the eating no flesh from which the blood had not been drained off. They were received as “strangers within the gate” of Israel, and could attend the synagogues, but could not pass beyond the Court of the Heathen, in the Temple.

Of this class, some Greeks, then at Jerusalem, had heard of Jesus, perhaps had seen and listened to him, and were anxious to know him. Modestly asking an introduction from Philip, the only apostle bearing a Greek name, he forthwith, in company with Andrew, communicated the request to Jesus, who was greatly pleased to welcome men who seemed an earnest of his future triumphs among the great heathen nations.

Going out, therefore, to the Court of the Heathen, where they were standing, he gladly entered into conversation with them. But, with his joy, the nearness of his death rose in his mind, with the results it would bring to the heathen world at large,¹ and his emotion broke forth in words full of sublimity.

“The hour has come,” said he, lifting his face, as we may believe, to heaven, “appointed by my Father, when the Son of man shall enter into his glory by death.² For it must be that I die, that my work may bear its due fruit—as the grain must fall into the ground and perish, that it may bring forth much fruit.

As it is needful for me thus to die, to make my work triumph, so also is it needful for you, my followers, to be willing to die daily. He who so loves his life as not to be ready to yield it for me, will lose eternal life hereafter; but he who, in this world, cheerfully gives

¹ John x. 15, 16; xii. 20–36.

² John xvii. 5; vi. 62; 1 Pet. i. 11.

up life itself for me, will gain life everlasting. If any man wish to serve me, let him imitate me in my readiness even to die; and where I go, there, also, will he follow, and dwell with me; for if any one thus truly serve me, my Father will thus honour him."

The awful vision of the immediate future, meanwhile, for a moment, crossed his thoughts. It was the foreshadowing of Gethsemane.

"Now is my soul troubled," cried he, with a voice of infinite sadness.¹ In his agony of soul, he faltered for a moment at the thought of all through which he had so soon to pass. "What shall I say?" he added, as if communing with himself; "shall I pray—Father, save me from this hour?" No, indeed, for, for this cause—to die for the truth—came I unto this hour. The momentary shrinking from the Cross then passed away, and, as if repeating aloud his inward thoughts, he cried aloud, "Father, glorify Thy name, through my death for man."

Forthwith there sounded a voice from the cloudless April sky, and the words were heard—"I *have* glorified My name, already, through thee; and I *shall* glorify it again, by thine entrance on thy heavenly glory through death!"

"It thunders," muttered some, whose souls were least quick to realize what had happened. "No," said others, "it was an angel speaking to him. He is a prophet, at least, if not the Messiah, and God speaks thus to him by a heavenly messenger." But the disciples around, and Jesus himself, knew whence it came.

"You may not understand," said Jesus to the disciples and the crowd, "whence this voice comes, and why it is sent. It is the voice of my Father in heaven, and comes, not for my sake, but for yours, to take away your unbelief, and to strengthen your faith. The time presses for your decision regarding me. Even now the judgment of my Father is being given forth against those

¹ John xii. 27 ff.

who reject me. Now shall the prince of this world—Satan—be cast out from his rule over it.

“So it shall be; for if I be lifted up from the earth by the death of the cross, I shall draw all men to me.”

The people round, accustomed to speak freely with the Rabbis on the subject of their addresses, were at a loss to reconcile his words with their ideas of the Messiah,¹ respecting whom they had heard Scriptures read in the synagogue, describing him as a priest for ever, and his dominion as one which should never pass away or be destroyed, but stand for ever and ever,² and had come to expect, in consequence, an everlasting reign of the Messiah on earth.

What then did he mean, by saying that the Son of man—a name by which they understood the Christ—must be crucified? Who was this Son of man to whom he referred?

“If you wish to comprehend what I have said about my being lifted up,”³ said he, “let me tell you. I shall be with you only a very little longer. Walk so, while ye have me, the light, by believing in me, that darkness do not overtake you. With me, the truth which now lights you, will be gone, and you know that he who walks in darkness, cannot tell which way to go. While ye have me, the Light, believe on the light, that ye may become sons of light.”

It was still early in the afternoon, and he might have stayed in the Temple till it shut at sunset, then a few minutes after six in the evening. But these were almost the last words he was to speak as a public teacher. There remained only a brief interval of communion with the loved ones round him, and then would come the scenes of Calvary. His work was over, except its final and greatest act. Casting a last sad look of pity on all, he turned away to Bethany, to seek seclusion, till the time came for his death.

¹ John xii. 34.

² Ps. cx. 4; Dan. vii. 14; ii. 44.

³ John xii. 35-43.

Once more, only, was the pleading voice raised. A number of those near followed him as he retired, and he could not tear himself from them, without a final outburst of yearning desire for their salvation. Turning round, and raising his voice till the sound rang far and wide, he cried—

“To believe in me,¹ and to believe in God, are the same thing. He who has faith in me, believes not so much in me as in Him who sent me. I came into the world to enlighten men, that every one who yields himself to my guidance, may be as when one walks after a light, and thus no longer remains in darkness. The end of my coming is not to judge the world, but to save it. He who rejects me, has in my words a judge that will condemn him hereafter. For I have taught only that which I was sent by my Father to speak, and my teaching, if obeyed, secures everlasting life to men. I am he whom God hath sent, and my words are the words of God.”

Nothing in these last discourses had seemed more strange to the apostles than his prediction of the early destruction of Jerusalem,² and of the Temple itself, and as they now passed with him to the outer gate, and down the eastern steps to the Kedron Valley, they could not refrain from speaking to him respecting this.

“Master,” said they, “see what a wondrous structure this Temple is!”

But Jesus looked at all this strength, wealth, and magnificence, with very different eyes. To him the Jewish Church had outlived its day, and had sunk into approaching death, which the splendour of its Temple could not hide. Israel, in rejecting him, had shown itself ripe for Divine judgment. His death, now close at hand, would seal the fate of the nation and its religion.

“Yes,” said Jesus, in utter sadness, “I see all: they

¹ John xii. 44-50.

² Matt. xxiv. 1-14; Mark xiii. 1-13; Luke xxi. 5-19.

are very great buildings; but I tell you solemnly, the day will come when there will not be one stone of them all, left on another.”¹

He said nothing more, but went out of the city by the Kedron Valley, with its gardens and mansions; a picture of peace and prosperity, to the Mount of Olives. Sitting down on a knoll, the apostles had Mount Moriah once more before them, crowned by the Temple, like a mountain with snow.

In the group around, Peter and James, and John and Andrew, sat nearest their Master, and as they looked at it—their thoughts still ran on the words in which he had doomed it to destruction.² Their only idea of the Messiah, even yet, was that of a deliverer of their race, who would raise Israel to world-wide supremacy. They could not imagine that the Holy City and its Temple would perish before the end of the world, and he must surely return sooner than that. The destruction of the city, therefore, could not, they fancied, be before the destruction of all things. They would fain know what sign would forewarn them of the approach of this catastrophe.

“Tell us, Master,” said a favoured one, “when shall these things, of which thou hast spoken, take place? And what sign will there be of thy coming, and of the end of the world?”

Instead of giving them dates, which would have been useless, Our Lord, as usual, gave, rather, practical counsels. Troubles would first come: they would be sorely persecuted; false teachers would rise; it would be necessary to save themselves by flight. The great matter was that they should be found watching for his return. To impress this more forcibly, he threw his words into the form of parables.

“In that day of my final coming it will be,” said he, “as when, at a marriage,³ the maidens invited to play

¹ Matt. xxiv. 2.

² Matt. xxiv. 3.

³ Matt. xxv. 1-46.

and sing in the marriage procession, prepare to go out to meet the bridegroom and lead him to the house of the bride, where the marriage is to be celebrated. Let me suppose there were ten such maidens — five wise, five foolish. The five foolish ones took their lamps with them, to help the display and light up the path of the bridegroom, but they forgot to take oil with them, to refill the lamps when they had burned out. But the wise not only took their lamps, but oil in their oil-flasks¹ as well. All the ten, thus differently prepared, went forth from the home of the bride, and waited in a house, on the way by which the bridegroom must come, to be ready to go out and escort him, when he passed.

“But he delayed so long that they all fell asleep. At last, at midnight, they were suddenly roused; for the people in the streets had heard the music and shouts, and had seen at a distance the light of the lamps and torches of the procession, and raised the cry—‘The bridegroom is coming, go out to meet him’! Then they all arose, and trimmed each her own lamp, to have it ready. But the foolish ones now found their lamps going out, and asked the wise ones to give them some of their oil. They were told, however,—‘We cannot possibly do so, for we have only oil enough for ourselves’; go to the sellers, and buy what you need.

“But while they were away buying it, the bridegroom came, and the five who were ready, joined the procession, and went in with the bridegroom to the marriage and the marriage-feast, and the door was shut. After a time, the other five came, and knocked at the gate with anxious entreaty, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ But he answered, ‘I do not know you. You were not among the other maids of the bride in the procession, and, therefore, have nothing to do at my marriage.’

“Learn from this parable that only those who

¹ Small clay bottles with a lip for pouring.

patiently watch and wait, doing their duty, till I come, though they know neither the day nor the hour when I shall do so, will have a part in the joys of my heavenly kingdom. All my followers will then be, as it were, my bride, and I their bridegroom; but those who are not true to the end, will be shut out from the marriage feast."

The apostles and the others who followed Jesus had been sitting long, in the cool of the evening, on the pleasant slope of Olivet, listening to his discourse, but their Master's stay with them was now nearly over, and he was loath to bring his words to an end. He still went on, therefore, and next repeated to them the parable he had before delivered near Jericho—of the talents lent by the Lord to his servants. Its awful close, however, which represents the unprofitable servant as cast into the outer darkness, with its weeping and gnashing of teeth, brought before him all the terrors of the last judgment, and led him to close by a picture of that awful day.

"The parable of the talents," said he, "shows that every one must needs make the utmost possible use of all the different gifts entrusted to him, for my service. For, at my coming, I shall reckon with you all, and those who have been faithful to me shall receive high rewards in heaven, but those who have left their gifts, however small, unused, will have those gifts taken from them, and they themselves will be thrust out of my kingdom."

He then proceeded, in words such as no mere man could ever dream of using; words which we seem to hear spoken with the light as of other worlds shining from the speaker's eyes:—

"When I shall come in my glory, amidst the splendours of heaven, and with all the angels of God, then will I sit on the throne of my glory, as kings of the earth when they sit to judge, and all nations shall be gathered before me, by my angels,¹ and I will separate

¹ Matt. xxiv. 31, &c.

them, one from another, as you have seen a shepherd separate the white sheep from the black goats, and I will set the sheep on my right hand, but the goats on my left.

"Then shall I say, as King, to them on my right hand: 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the earth.¹ For I was hungry, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me.'

"Then shall the righteous answer, saying, 'When, Lord, saw we thee hungry, and fed thee; or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in; or naked and clothed thee? Or, when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?'

"And I, the King, will answer them: 'Verily I say to you, Inasmuch as ye did it to one of these my brethren, even the least of them—ye did it unto me.'

"Then shall I also say to those on my left hand: 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels, but now to be shared by you. For I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye did not clothe me; sick, and in prison, and ye did not visit me.'

"Then they will try, vainly, to plead innocence. 'Lord,' they will say, 'when did we see thee hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister to thee? Lord, we never saw thee thus, and, therefore, have never refused thee our service.'

"But I will answer them: 'Verily I say to you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, my

¹ Matt. v. 3-12; 1 Cor. ii. 9; Heb. xi. 16.

brethren, whom you had with you and might have helped, ye did it not to me. Had ye truly, and not in name only, believed in me, ye would have shown it in deeds of love for my sake.'

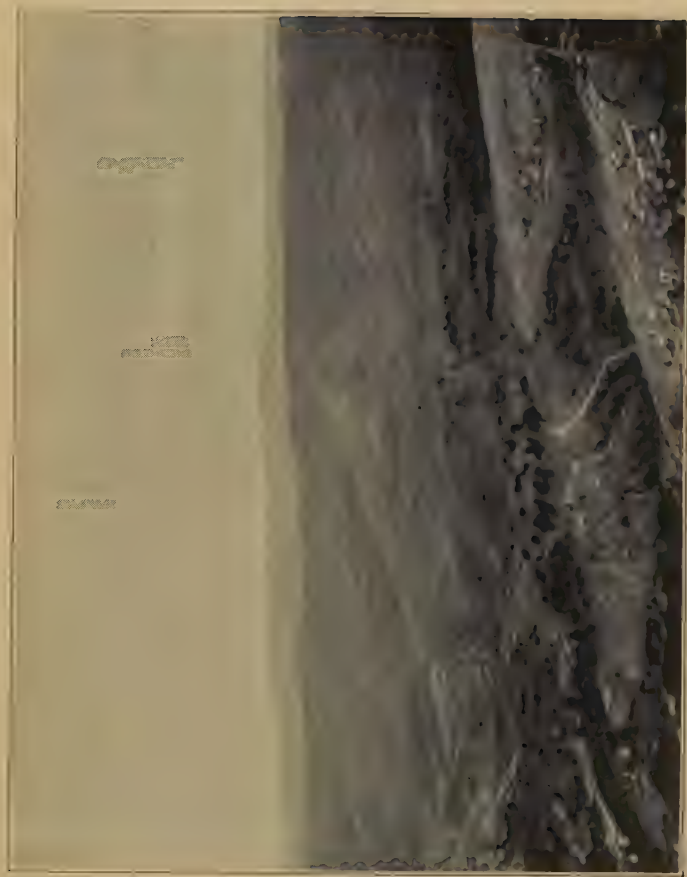
"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal."

CHAPTER XXXI

WEDNESDAY AND THURSDAY IN HOLY WEEK

It was the twelfth day of the new moon,¹ now rounding to fulness, when the last words had been spoken in the Temple, and farewell taken of it for ever. Jesus had hitherto lingered in its courts till the gates closed, at sunset, after the evening sacrifice, but his soul was filled this day with immeasurable sadness. Israel would not hear the words which alone could save it, and had not only rejected him, but was even now plotting his death. He had left the Temple courts, therefore, in the early afternoon, to spend some hours with the little band of followers he was so soon to leave, and passing quietly and unheeded through the stream of pilgrims and citizens, had rested during his long discourse to his apostles, beneath one of the fig-trees of Olivet, gazing at all he had left for ever. Forty years before the Temple perished, and, therefore, during Our Lord's public life, the hindmost lamp of the sacred seven-branched candlestick in the Holy Place, one night went out; the crimson wool tied to the horns of the scapegoat, which ought to have turned white, had remained red; "the lot of the Lord," for the goat to be offered on the Day of Atonement, had come out on the left hand; and the gates of the Temple, duly shut overnight, had been found open in the morning. A generation later, it was to be told, with pale lips, among the heathen, that when the Temple was near its fall, a more than human voice had been heard from the Holy of Holies, crying "The gods have departed," and

¹ Tuesday at sunset to Wednesday at sunset, April 3-4 (13th Nisan).



VIEW FROM MOUNT OF OLIVES, TOWARDS BETHLEHEM

that presently, a great sound, as of their issuing forth, had been heard.

But the true hour of Jehovah's leaving it, and that for ever, was when HIS SON passed, that afternoon, through its gates, to re-enter them no more.

Rising after he had ended his discourse, he climbed the slope with his handful of followers, on the way to the well-loved cottage at Bethany; and as they went on spoke once more to them of his approaching fate. "You know," said he, "that after two days is the Passover, and that the Son of man is appointed by God to be delivered over to be crucified."

Meanwhile, his enemies were busy. It was now Tuesday evening, and nothing alarming had followed the preceding Sunday. The multitude, however, had lost their enthusiasm, and in many cases, grown even hostile. There was less to fear than the authorities had apprehended. Yet the crowd was fickle, and thousands of Galileans, the countrymen of Jesus, were at the feast, which was always so restless a time that the Roman governor kept a double garrison in Jerusalem while it lasted, and himself came up to the Holy City from Cæsarea. The fiery Galileans might rise if Jesus were apprehended, and any tumult would be certain to bring severe measures at the hands of the Romans, on the community at large.

The heads of the priesthood and of the Rabbis were hence in a difficulty, and met to consult on the wisest course. The acting high-priest, Joseph, known among the people as "Caiaphas," "the oppressor," was the soul of the movement against Jesus; for his memorable words, "Why not this one man die, rather than the nation perish?" had first given formal encouragement to the idea of putting him to death. Throwing himself into the plot, he put the court of his palace, in the Upper City, at the disposal of those engaged in it, and there they and he met, to scheme how they might get the Hated One into their power without the knowledge of the people, in order to hand him over to the Romans

for crucifixion. The meeting could not, however, come to any fixed plan, from dread of a popular rising. They could only watch, and take advantage of the course of events.

While murder was thus being discussed in the halls of the primate, peace and sacred friendship reigned in the pleasant home at Bethany.¹ The household consisted of the sisters Martha and Mary, and their brother Lazarus, so strangely brought back from the unseen world—the one man raised from the dead of whose second earthly life we know anything—and was a scene of tender respect and loving homage. To do Jesus honour, the family had invited guests to meet him at supper, in the larger house of one Simon, once a leper, but now cured or perhaps dead; Lazarus joining in it with them.

It was, in itself, a proof of tender love, that at such a time, when the life of their guest was sought by the authorities, and every one was required to help them to arrest him, he should have been thus honoured; for Bethany was close to Jerusalem, and the act might bring disaster on the family.² But a still higher tribute was paid him. The sisters had often pondered how they could show their gratitude for all he had so richly done for them. He had given them and their brother a new religious life, and had shown how truly he was the Messiah,³ by bringing back Lazarus from the grave. They knew, moreover, his danger, for the disciples, doubtless, repeated to them the last words he had spoken.

It was common at social parties to anoint the heads of Rabbis with fragrant oil, and a grateful penitent had at an earlier period anointed even the feet of Jesus, washing them, moreover, with her tears, and wiping them with her hair, flowing loose, in self-forgetfulness. But now Mary outdid all former honour paid him. The costliest anointing oil of antiquity was the pure

¹ Matt. xxvi. 1-13; Mark xiv. 1-9; John xii. 2-8.

² John xii. 10, 11.

³ John xi. 27.

spikenard, drawn from an Indian plant, and exposed for sale throughout the Roman Empire in flasks of alabaster, at a great price.

Of this Mary had bought a bottle, containing about twelve ounces' weight, and now, coming behind the guests as they reclined, opened the seal and poured some of the perfume, first on the head and then on the feet of Jesus, drying them, presently, with the hair of her head, like her predecessor. She had rendered a tribute than which she could have given no higher to a king; but as an expression of holy honour to him, he lovingly accepted it. It raised different thoughts, however, in some around. As the fragrant odours filled the room voices were heard muttering that it was wrong to spend so much for such a purpose. "This ointment," said Judas Iscariot, "might have been sold for three hundred pence,¹ and given to the poor. That would have been a worthy act; but this——!"

The reply of Jesus showed no resentment, and must have carried joy to the tender heart that had felt its highest offering too little to bestow on such a guest.

"Why do you trouble her?" said he to the company, especially to Judas. "Let her alone. She has wrought a good work on me, for ye have the poor with you always, but you have not me always with you. She has done what she could: she has anointed me for the grave. I tell you, wherever the Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, what she has done will also be told for a memorial of her."

Judas, except perhaps Simon the Zealot, the only southern Jew in the Twelve, listened with bitter feelings to the praise of such an act. He had been with Jesus before the appointment of the apostles, and must, even then, have been conspicuous as a disciple. The good seed of Christ's words had sprung up in his heart, as in those of the others in these early days; but evil had been let spring up ere long, and it had grown to rank

¹ About £9, 13s. 9d. of our money.

strength that slowly choked all else. Like his brethren, he cherished gross and selfish views of the prospects to be opened for them by their Master. If some of them were to be the high officials in the great monarchy they expected, he had trusted to get, at least, some post; profitable, if less splendid. In the minds of the others, the dream did not hinder their love and duty to the Master; in his, self seized and held, abidingly, the first place. The mildew of his soul had spread apace. Trusted with the common purse of the brotherhood, into which passed the gifts of friends, to meet the humble expenses of each day, the honour, sought at first perhaps in all uprightness, became a fatal snare. His religion withered apace. Once a disciple from honest anxiety, he continued one in outward form from sordid motives. Gain became a passion with him, till, under the very eyes of his Master, he stole the petty funds in his hands.

The entry to Jerusalem had kindled his hopes, after many disappointments, for the popular excitement promised to force Jesus to head a great rising. But, blind to his own interest, as Judas must have thought him, he had thrown away the opportunity. Instead of uniting with the dignitaries of Judaism, in a mighty Jewish revolt, he had assailed them as wrongdoers. Instead of a crown, he had spoken of a cross; instead of honours for his followers, he had foretold persecutions and martyrdom. The bounty of Mary had sufficed to kindle smouldering resentment and disloyalty to a flame. If ruin were certain, he would profit, if he could, before all was over. Had not Christ, he argued, disappointed him; led him about, for years, in hopes of gain in the end; and had he not, now, told him all that he could expect was poverty and suffering? He would go to the chief priests, and see what could be done, to revenge himself by betraying him for pay.

Stealing out, therefore, with guilty thoughts, from the quiet cottage, forgetful of all he had seen and heard through the last three years, he made his way, in the

darkness of night, to the Temple.¹ The watch was at its post at the gates, but Judas found means to reveal his object to the captain in charge, and was admitted. "I come to betray Jesus of Nazareth," muttered Judas. "He had better be taken to the chief priests," replied those addressed. Some of the council hastily summoned forthwith, gladly entertained his proposal, for it was clear that Our Lord would never give them open and honest grounds for his arrest. Treason from within must come to their aid. So they bargained with him; meanly enough, indeed; for they offered for his villainy, if successful, only thirty shekels of the sanctuary²—the price of a slave. But the greed of an Oriental was not proof against even so paltry a bribe. He sold himself as their tool, and from that time sought a favourable opportunity to betray Jesus, when the people were not round.

The next day,³ our Thursday, was the fourteenth of Nisan, on which labour ceased at noon. Before then, all leaven was removed from every house, in preparation for the Passover in the next evening. It was permitted to keep the feast that evening, if necessary, but the bulk of the people celebrated it on the Friday. Jesus, however, knowing he was about to die, chose the Thursday.

The Passover had been founded in memory of the departure from Egypt, but its date permitted the union with it of the feast of first-fruits, to celebrate the opening harvest, and it was also called, from rites connected with it, the feast of unleavened bread.

We are not told how Jesus spent Wednesday, for the supper in the house at Bethany was on Tuesday evening. He apparently stayed in privacy, awaiting the coming day.

On Thursday morning the disciples, taking it for granted that he would celebrate the feast with them, came to him early to receive instructions. Would he

¹ Matt. xxvi. 14-16; Mark xiv. 10; Luke xxii. 1-6.

² About 2s. 6d. each.

³ Wednesday at sunset to Thursday at sunset, April 4-5 (14th Nisan).

keep it, as he legally might, in Bethany, for the village was counted by the Rabbis part of Jerusalem for religious usages, and the lamb might be eaten in Bethany, though it must be killed, at the Temple? It was generally bought on the tenth Nisan, according to the rule of the Law;¹ and though this command was not strictly observed, Jesus was careful to fulfil all innocent duties.

No doubt the disciples expected that Bethany would be chosen, for he had solemnly turned away from Jerusalem, two days before, and to go thither again would be to put himself in the power of his enemies. But he had resolved once more to visit the city so dear to him. It was the place appointed by the Law for the feast, and he would there be in the midst of the rejoicing multitudes. He wished, also, to throw a greater sacredness over the institution he was about to found that night in place of the ancient Passover. It was well to link it in the minds of the apostles with the sacredness of the Temple under whose shadow it was established, and with the City of the Great King, and the gathering of Israel.

Turning, therefore, to Peter and John, his usual messengers, he told them to go and prepare the Passover, that he and the Twelve might eat it together.² "On entering the city," said he, "you will meet a man bearing an earthen jar of water; follow him into the house he enters, ask for the master, and say, 'THE TEACHER'³ told us to ask you, 'Where is the room intended for me, in which to eat the Passover with my disciples?'" And he will himself show you his guest-chamber, on the upper floor, provided with couches, ready for us. Get the supper prepared for us there."

The two started at once, and found everything as Jesus had said, and by evening all was in readiness to receive him and the Ten. Who thus entertained

¹ Exod. xii. 3.

² Matt. xxvi. 17-19; Mark xiv. 12-16; Luke xxii. 7-13.

³ Thus in the Greek.

him is not told us. It may have been John Mark,¹ or perhaps Joseph of Arimathea, the early disciple, and the friend after death. Universal hospitality prevailed in this matter, and the only recompense that could be given was the skin of the paschal lamb, and the earthen dishes used at the meal. Not fewer than ten, but often as many as twenty—enough, in any case, to consume the entire lamb—could sit down together; but Jesus wished to have none but his apostles with him, that he might bid them a final, tender farewell. Women were not commonly present, and indeed were excluded by many; but, apart from this, the evening was designed as a time of deepest communion with the trusted Twelve alone, and hence, neither the outer circle of disciples, nor the ministering women who had lovingly followed him from Galilee, were invited.

Peter and John had much to do beforehand. Perhaps the lamb had yet to be bought that morning, for its purchase on the tenth had rather fallen out of use. They had to choose, from the pens in which the victims were offered for sale, a male lamb of a year old, without blemish of any kind. The feast could begin immediately after the sun set and the appearing of the stars, which was proclaimed by fresh trumpet blasts from the Temple.

Judas had stolen back to Bethany before daylight, that his absence might not be noticed, and, after another day's hypocrisy, under the eyes of his Master, followed him, with the other apostles, to Jerusalem, in the evening. Dread of unknown dangers filled every heart. Though still clinging to their old dream of an earthly kingdom of God, under their Master, their spirits must have sunk as they passed through the vast multitudes, with no sign of preparation for a movement on Christ's behalf, and along the lighted streets, in which no one took notice of them. That the priesthood had denounced him was, itself, enough to

¹ Acts xii. 12.

fill their simple minds with dismay. And was not the turban of the high-priest worn by a fierce Sadducee? Were not all the governing families of that party? As they passed under the shadow of the Temple, with its gleaming lights, its marble bastions, and its immemorial traditions, they must have felt that, unless Jesus chose at last to use his supernatural power in self-defence and for self-advancement, they were hopelessly lost.

To himself the moment was unspeakably solemn. His scarcely founded Kingdom was about to pass through the severest trial. All hopes of a worldly monarchy, so deeply rooted in the minds of his followers, were to be destroyed, and he, the head of the Kingdom, was to be apprehended, dishonoured, and crucified. The thoughts of his disciples were to be raised from the idea of a Messiah present with them, to a Messiah in heaven, to appear, henceforth, no more, till he returned from the invisible world.

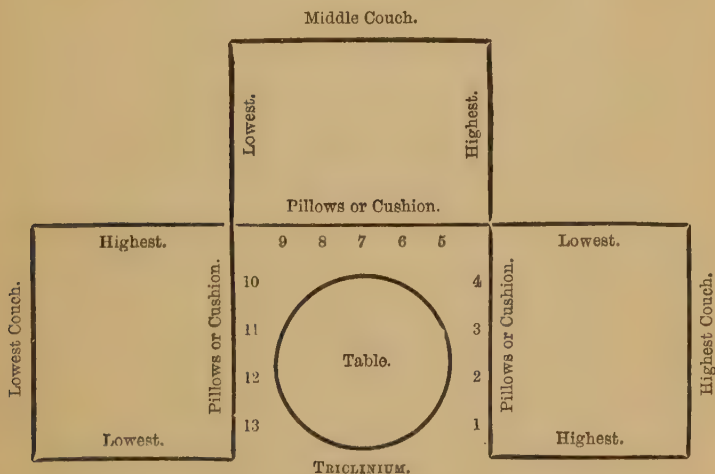
When the Twelve, with their Master, had entered the room, to take their places on the cushions, for the meal,¹ the greatness of the change yet to be wrought on their minds was once more strikingly shown. In spite of all he had said, each strove to get for himself the most honourable place he could; position at table marking precedence in the East.

As the head of the group, Jesus naturally took the first place on the highest couch—the outermost, on the right of the hollow square; his face towards the second place; his feet outwards. Resting his left elbow and side on a cushion the whole breadth of the couch, his right hand was thus free, while the apostle next him reclined so that his head lay, as it were, in his Master's bosom. It had been the custom, in ancient times, to eat the Passover standing, but the Rabbis had changed this for the Gentile practice of reclining. It was like slaves, they said, to eat standing, and as

¹ Matt. xxvi. 20; Mark xiv. 17; Luke xxii. 14-18, 24-30; John xiii. 1-20.

Israel was not a race of slaves but of free men they should eat the feast reclining; a flattery so pleasing that even the poorest adopted the new mode.

But this pride in the apostles, made still more fierce by selfish ambition, in prospect of the glory for which they still hoped, could ill brook taking low places. It was a grave matter for them, as for the Pharisees, who should have the higher seats, for they fancied that it might affect their future position in the kingdom to



be founded, as they dreamed, presently. So the strife that had broken out on the other side of Jericho, once more distressed their Master, and he could only still it by repeating the keen rebuke he then gave them. "In my kingdom," said he, "to be humble is to be great; the lowliest is, in it, the highest." No more was needed; the struggle, now, would rather be for the lowest place.

But he did not confine himself to words. Rising from the couch, when the supper was just about to

begin, and girding himself with a towel, like a slave, after laying aside his upper garments, he poured water into a basin, and began to wash the feet of his disciples. Pride and selfish ambition could not be more strikingly and touchingly reproved, and no greater proof could be shown of love than such humility. Had they all been true-hearted, it would have been amazing, but it was still more so, when he knew that one of them was already a traitor.

He seems to have begun with Simon Peter, his chief apostle, but the warm heart and impulsive nature of the man shrank from allowing his Master to abase himself thus. "Lord," said he, "dost *thou* wash *my* feet!" "What I do," replied Jesus, "thou understandest not now, but wilt know hereafter." "*Thou* shalt never wash *my* feet, Lord," repeated the apostle. "If I do not wash thee," said Jesus, "thou hast no part with me." "Lord, if that be the case," broke out Peter, "wash not my feet only, but my hands and my head." "It is not necessary," said Jesus. "He who, according to Jewish ways, has taken a bath before his meal, needs no more than to cleanse the dust from his feet, which has clung to them on the way from the bath. Except this, he is clean, and it is the same with all of you, but him who intends to betray me. By my word which I have spoken to you, and the faith kindled in you by it,¹ you are already clean in the sense I mean—right in the desire of your heart towards me. Yet, though thus clean, the dust still clings to you in part, and makes a last washing needful." The hour was at hand for his shedding his blood for them for the remission of their sins—and he would now prepare them for it by this tender act, for it taught not only humility, but that he alone could take away their sin.

Having washed their feet, and resumed his garments, he once more took his place on the couch.

"Do you know," he asked, as he did so, "the meaning

¹ John xv. 3; xvii. 17.

of what I have now done? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for I am both. Learn, then, that, if I, your Master and Lord, wash your feet, you, also, ought to wash one another's feet, for I have done this as an example to you, that you should do to each other as I have done to you. You know, and I would have you remember it, that a servant is not greater than his lord, nor an apostle than he who sent him forth, so that you may well imitate me, your superior, in my humility. If you understand what I say, it is well for you if you act on my teaching. I do not, indeed, speak of you all. I know your characters and hearts, but all has happened because the Scripture must be fulfilled, which says, 'He that eats my bread lifted up his heel against me;' to trip and overthrow me.¹ I tell you thus beforehand, that when it does take place, you may believe I am indeed the Messiah. But I announce it, that you may go forth confidently on the mission on which I have sent you. He who receives you is as if he had received myself, and he who receives me receives God the Father who sent me."²

The supper now began, but Jesus was still troubled by the presence of the traitor.³ At last his feelings broke out into words. "Verily," said he, "one of you who eat with me, will betray me. His hand is with me on the table." They had never hitherto understood his hints, and to their honest and faithful hearts the very idea of treason was almost beyond belief. Nor could they think who was meant. One by one, they began to ask, "Lord, is it I?" "It is he," replied Jesus, "who dips with me into the dish. The Son of man, indeed, goes from this world in this way, by the counsel of God, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed! It would have been well for him if he had not been born!" Words thus general only increased the pain of all. At last, Peter, not venturing to ask

¹ Ps. xli. 9; John xiii. 18.

² John xiv. 10, 20; xiii. 20.

³ Matt. xxvi. 21-25; Mark xiv. 18-21; Luke xxii. 21-23; John xiii. 21-35.

directly whom it could be, beckoned to John, who lay next Our Lord, to ask him who could be so base. "It is he," whispered Jesus, "who is just about to dip the bitter herbs into this dish with me, and to whom I shall give some of it presently."

He then dipped a piece of bread into the dish,¹ and handed it to Judas. "Is it I?" asked the guilty man, conscience - stricken, and yet unmelted. The awful reply, that "it was," tore away the mask at once, and unveiled his heart. But that all was known only hardened the betrayer. He could think only of himself and his fancied wrongs. Satan had entered his soul, and the eyes of the Master saw it. "What you have to do," said Jesus, "do quickly." He could not breathe freely till the miserable man had left. Judas knew the meaning of the command at once, and, having received the piece of bread, dipped in the dish, moodily took it, and silently withdrew. The eleven were too much confused to think of the end as so near at hand. Betrayal might come, but at some future, perhaps distant, time. They only fancied, therefore, that Judas had left either to buy what might be needed during the week of the feast, or for that special night; or that Jesus had bethought himself of some deed of mercy to the poor and sent him to carry it out. The traitor gone, Christ felt free to speak. In the near vision of the Cross, his work seemed already finished;² his glory, as Conqueror of Death and Hell and Redeemer of Mankind, attained, and that of God the Father shown forth.

"Now," said he, "the Son of man is already glorified. And God, who will be glorified in my death for the salvation of man, will assuredly crown me with His own glory, when I return to Him. The betrayer has gone to accomplish it!"³

"Little children, I shall be a little while longer with you, and after that you will feel the want of my presence, and wish for me; but, as I once said to the

¹ Bread was eaten with the bitter herbs.

² John xiii. 26-37.

³ John xvii. 5.

Jews, I shall be where you cannot follow and find me. Let me give you a last command—my very last: a new command, to be kept so much the more—that, henceforth, ye love each other, and that with the same love as I have had to you all. You must, henceforth, be known as my disciples by the love you show to each other.”

Peter, however, could not bear, and still dwelt, in his thoughts, on the sad words. “Lord,” said he, “you speak of going away; pray tell us whither you are going?” “I go to a place,” replied Jesus, “where you cannot follow me at present, but you will, one day, follow me.” Peter’s heart could not be silent. “Why can I not go with thee now, Lord?” said he. “I am ready to lay down my life for thee.”

“Do you think so?” replied Jesus, with a look full of friendship, and yet of earnest sadness.¹ “You little know your own heart. All of you will forsake me, and leave me to my enemies, this very night, as the prophet has foretold—‘I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered abroad.’² But be not cast down with too much sorrow. After I have risen from the dead, I will go into Galilee, and gather you round me once more.” The idea of forsaking his master, whom he loved so dearly, was too dreadful, however, to Peter, in the self-confidence of his affection, to allow him to accept it as possible. “Other men may, perhaps, be offended on account of thee, Lord,” said he, “but if all the world were to be so, I, at any rate, will never leave thee.”

“Simon, Simon,” replied Jesus, using the old name by which he had known him long ago, “take care. Self-confidence will be your undoing. Satan has seen it, and has sought to have you and your fellow-disciples given into his power, as he once did with Job, to sift you as wheat is sifted. He would fain have it that your professions are only chaff, and he will shake and test you, to try to make you turn against me. But I have

¹ Matt. xxvi. 31–35; Mark xiv. 27–31; Luke xxii. 31–38.

² Zech. xiii. 7.

prayed for you, that your faith in me may not fail altogether, "and when once you have turned again, see that you strengthen the faith of your fellow-disciples."

Peter was sorely distressed at such words. Conscious of his honest love and fidelity, it seemed as if Jesus doubted both. His warm heart was full. His master spoke of his acting in a way of which he could not believe himself capable. "Lord," said he, "I am ready to go with thee to prison, or to death." "Wilt thou lay down thy life for me, Peter?" replied Jesus, with a voice full of tenderness; "I tell you that this very night, before the cock crow the second time, you will thrice deny that you know me." "If I were to die with thee," answered the apostle, "I will not deny thee." "I can say the same," added all the other apostles.

The evening was now somewhat advanced, according to Eastern notions, but the Passover meal, in its different rites, could not be hurried. Though we cannot tell how far the usual customs were followed by Jesus, the feast began thus in other circles. A cup of red wine, mingled with a fourth part of water, to make it a pleasant and temperate drink, was filled by one of the guests and given to the head of the company, who took it in his right hand as he rested on his left side and arm on the couch, and thanked God in the words—"Blessed be thou, O Lord our God, thou King of the world, who createdst the fruit of the vine." He then tasted the cup, and passed it round. Thanks for the institution of the washing of hands followed, and then the washing itself, which was merely formal. "Bitter" herbs, such as endives, lettuce, and the like, were next set on the table, to represent the hard life of Egypt. Thanks were given for them also, and then they were passed round and eaten, after dipping them in a mixture of salt and vinegar. The unleavened bread—the bread of affliction—which gave one of its names to the feast, followed next, and then a bowl of pounded fruit, brick-coloured, in memory of Egyptian slavery, used only at this feast, and, finally, the Passover lamb. The

head of the company now once more gave thanks to Him "who created the fruit of the earth," the bitter herbs were dipped by each in the bowl, and a piece of the contents, "the size of an olive," eaten with them by all. A second single cup of wine mingled with water, was next poured out, discourse on the lessons of the feast was held, and then the hundred and thirteenth and hundred and fourteenth Psalms, part of the Jewish "Hallelujah," were sung. Another short thanksgiving followed, and the cup was once more passed round and tasted.

The household father now washed his hands again and then took two of the unleavened cakes, and breaking one of them across, laid one piece on the other, and after pronouncing a thanksgiving—"Blessed be He who makes bread to grow from the earth," wrapped some bitter herbs round a piece of the broken bread, dipped it in the bowl, and ate it, after another thanksgiving, and, with it, a part of the lamb; the others following his example. The supper had only now properly begun. Each ate and drank at his will; all, alike, in the patriarchal way of the East, lifting what they chose from the common dish, with their fingers. A third cup of wine and water passed round, marked the close of the feast as a religious solemnity.

The meal had advanced thus far, and was thus virtually finished, when the warning had been given of the approaching denial of their Master by Peter, and the weak-minded desertion of the Eleven. The solemn words, telling the dangers and trials before them, having been added, Jesus, now in the bosom of the little band—his companions through past years—introduced by an act befitting in its simplicity a religion like his, the institution which, henceforth, should take the place in his kingdom of the feast they had ended.

He was about to leave them, and, as yet, they had no rite to form a centre round which they might gather. Some emblem was needed, by which they should, here-

after, be distinguished; some common bond, which should outwardly link them to each other, and to their common Master. The Passover had, in the past, given the Jews an abiding remembrance of their relations to each other and to Jehovah. Jesus would now institute a special rite of a similar character for the members of his Church, in all ages and countries.

Nothing could have been more touching than the symbol thus introduced. The Third Cup was known as "the cup of blessing," and had marked the close of the Passover meal. The bread had been handed round with the words, "This is the bread of affliction;" and the flesh of the lamb had been distributed with the words, "This is the body of the Passover." The feast having been thus honoured,¹ Jesus took one of the round flat cakes before him, gave thanks, broke it, and handed it to the apostles, with words, the repetition, almost exactly, of those they had heard a moment before,—“Take, eat; this is my body, which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me.” Then, taking the cup, which had been filled for the fourth and last handing round, he gave thanks to God once more, and passed it to the circle, with the words, “Drink ye all of it, for this cup is the New Covenant” presently to be made “in my blood;” instead of the covenant, made also in blood, by God, with your fathers;² “it is,” in abiding symbol, “my blood of the Covenant” of my Father, with you,—the blood which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins. This do, as often as ye drink, in remembrance of me.”

For himself, he declined to taste it. “I will not drink, henceforth,” said he, “of the fruit of the vine—for it was still only wine—till that day when my Kingdom shall finally triumph, and my followers be gathered to the great heavenly feast. Then, I shall drink it new with you and them.”

Such, and so simple, was the new rite. To those

¹ Matt. xxvi. 26–29; Mark xiv. 22–25; Luke xxii. 19, 20; 1 Cor. xi. 23–25.

² Exod. xxiv. 8.

around him, there could be no doubt of its meaning and nature. The cup, he told them, was the symbol of the New Covenant, under which, as his followers, they had come, in distinction from that which for his sake they had left. It was to be a memorial of him, and a constant pledge of their faith in that death as the seal of this New Covenant between his disciples and God. Familiarity with the Passover made the new institution natural to the apostles, and the constant use of symbolical rites in Judaism prevented their mistaking its meaning. They saw in it an abiding memorial of their Lord; a vivid sign of their dependence on the merits of his death; the need of intimate communion with him as the bread of life; and the bond of the new brotherhood he had established. It henceforth distinguished the assemblies of his followers from the world at large, and, excepting baptism, was the only outward form established in the Church by their Master.

CHAPTER XXXII

GETHSEMANE AND THE BETRAYAL

JERUSALEM was the brightest and happiest of cities during the Passover week. But though universal rejoicing rose on every side, there was only sadness in the little band round Jesus. They were sore at heart at the baseness of Iscariot, at the dread of losing a Master they passionately loved, and at the utter miscarriage of all their earthly ambition. Christ had instituted a rite to mark them out from all other men, but it looked as if there would be little use for it in the apparently near overthrow of his infant Kingdom.

As they rested, in gloomy sadness, Jesus, to cheer them, by turning their minds to the glorious future, began the lofty and tender farewell recorded in John's Gospel.¹ "They must not let their heart be troubled" he told them. "He was leaving them to prepare a place in the many mansions of his Father, where he would gather them once more round him, to part no more. His death might seem a defeat, but it was in reality a triumph."

But before he went forth into the night, he could not break up for ever the communion he had had with them so long, without committing them to his heavenly Father in a parting prayer. While, however, he was thus tenderly bidding farewell to them, all was bustle and excitement among the Church authorities, now on the track of his blood by the help of Judas.

¹ John xiv. 1-31.

It was the Carnival of the year at Jerusalem, and the citizens were reaping a golden harvest from the myriads of pilgrims.

With the craft that habitually marked him, the tetrarch Antipas had come up from Tiberias, to show how devoutly he honoured the Law, and had taken his residence in the old castle of the Jewish kings, which still remained in the hands of his family. It was exactly opposite the Temple, to which he could cross by the upper bridge, between Zion and Moriah.

Pilate, also, had arrived from Cæsarea, to secure in person the preservation of order. His quarters were in the new palace, built by Herod the Great, on Zion; the pride of Jerusalem.

The high-priest at the time of the Passover was Caiaphas, but the real head of the priesthood was the crafty Hannas, without whom nothing of moment was done. As father of the greatest Sadducean family, he was notorious for his harsh judgments, and was presently to take the chief part in the death of Jesus, as his son afterwards did in that of St. James. Appointed high priest in the year A.D. 7, he had been deprived of the dignity seven years later, but the singular honour was reserved to him of seeing his five sons successively pontiffs—one of them twice.

Intrigue and unwearied plotting were the very life of him and his house. The gliding, deadly, snakelike smoothness with which they seized their prey was a wonder even to their own generation, and had given them a by-name as hissing vipers. No wonder, therefore, that John and Our Lord spoke of them in the same way. Hannas had managed to maintain his influence with three governors, through difficult times. Under one he was set aside, but, after a year, had displaced his successor, in favour of one of his own sons. He himself declined to hold the office again, on the same ground which Jonathan, another of his sons, afterwards pleaded. No one, they held, should resume the sacred vestments after having once laid them off.

Hannas bowed to this rule, and chose, henceforth, to hold the reins only in safe obscurity.

But though his five sons successively became high-priests, their cruelty and vices grew so marked after his death, that they speedily led to the ruin of his house.

At the time of the condemnation of Jesus, Caiaphas, son-in-law of Hannas, had held the high-priesthood for seventeen years, having given no excuse for setting him aside. He even retained it till after the great day, in the year A.D. 36, when the sacred vestments, so long held from them, were handed over permanently to the Jews, instead of being given out by the Romans a week before each great feast, for the seven days' purifications, washings, and consecrations necessary to free them from defilement, before they could be worn. Caiaphas, however, had little to do with procuring this great favour, and was deposed almost immediately after; Jonathan, the son of Hannas, being appointed in his stead.

Thus, at the time of the condemnation of Jesus, the acting high-priest was only a puppet in the hands of Hannas, his father-in-law.

Jewish tradition describes the grades of the ancient hierarchy as consisting of the high-priest; his deputy, who had two assistants; seven priests entrusted with the keys of the Temple; and three treasurers, who gave out the sacred vessels. Of those holding these offices when Jesus was condemned, we can still darkly make out some. At the right hand of Caiaphas sat Hannas, the real head. Jochanan, called John in the Acts of the Apostles, and one Alexander, seem to have held the next dignities, and after them came the five sons of Hannas, already an old man: Hannas, the younger, being destined to stain his pontificate by the murder of James, the brother of Jesus.

The names of some other members of what we may call the high-priestly council, still survive. Among these were Joazer and Eleazar, the sons of that Simon

Boëthus of Alexandria, whose daughter, the second Mariamne, the belle of Jerusalem, was married by Herod. Simon, though well-nigh a heretic in the eyes of the national party, had been made high-priest by his royal son-in-law, and his sons had succeeded him in the dignity, but bore an evil name. Their guard of spearmen, indeed, became an object of popular hatred. Simon, surnamed "the Quarrelsome,"—the murderer of St. James the son of Zebedee—and his son, afterwards high-priest, had a right to attend, and did so with a pomp which brought on the family the curse of the people—"woe to your fine feathers, ye family of the Quarrelsome!" Ismael, the handsomest man of his day, was another turbaned high counsellor, to be famed hereafter for the clubs and blows of his serving men, the greed of his bailiffs, and the Oriental luxury of his dress, one outer tunic of which cost a sum equal, perhaps, at this day, to eighteen hundred pounds. There were, also, Johanan, the persecutor of St. Paul, infamous in after times as a glutton, who seized even the holy sacrifices for his feasts: and Issachar, who, in his pontificate of a later day, would not sacrifice except in silk gloves, for fear of soiling his hands, afterwards barbarously cut off by King Agrippa. Such were the men about to seize Jesus. No wonder it is said that voices were heard from the Holy of Holies, crying, "Depart from the Temple, ye sons of Eli; ye defile the house of Jehovah!"

These elders were in no less agitation respecting Christ; for they, also, sought the preservation of things as they were. One or two of them—Nicodemus, and Joseph of Arimathea—were secretly in his favour, but they had not courage to take his part openly. The names of the rest have perished. The Scribes of the Sanhedrim shared the excitement. These men, with the elders of the people and a number of the Scribes—in all about seventy, formed the Sanhedrim or highest Jewish Court of Justice.

It was late in the night of Thursday when Jesus had

ended his last discourse and farewell prayer. According to the immemorial custom to chant Psalms at the feasts, the little band had already sung the first two of the six Psalms—the one hundred and thirteenth to the one hundred and eighteenth—which formed the great Hallelujah, when the second cup had been poured out.¹ Now at the close, they chanted with slow, solemn strains, one half responding with the word, Hallelujah, at the close of each verse. The anthem began fitly—“Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy and for Thy truth’s sake,” and closed with the words of the hundred and eighteenth Psalm—“Blessed be he that cometh in the name of Jehovah;” the Eleven responding—“in the name of Jehovah, Hallelujah!” And now all was over, and the Apostles, following their Master, went out into the night. They were on their way to Gethsemane.

The spirit of Jesus had, hitherto, been calm and serene. But the break with all the past, the shadow, deeper than that of Kedron, before them, for the time overwhelmed him. No wonder the apostles had been cast down when even he who had been exhorting them to dismiss sorrow, was himself moved. Behind him lay life, before him death; he was about to leave friends, and the fair earth, which, as a man, he loved, and his infant Church; the hope of the world he had come to save. Before him lay, not only death, but shame, derision, misconception. He, whose whole soul was truth, was to be crucified as a deceiver; the one on earth absolutely loyal to God was to die as a blasphemer. Loaded with false charges and feeling their baseless wickedness, he was to be put to death on their strength. How might it affect the little band, to whom the future of his kingdom was entrusted? He had hitherto kept from using his supernatural power in his own behalf—would he still do so? He had but to speak, and all would be changed; for he

¹ Isa. xxx. 29; Matt. xxvi. 30; Mark xiv. 26; Luke xxii. 39; John xviii. 1.

who could calm the waves of the sea, could quell the tumult of the people, and what were Temple guards or Roman soldiers against legions of angels? Would he still put aside all thought of self? Would he, to the end, let men do with him as they pleased, though he had at his command all the powers of heaven?

Nor was even this all. He was to give his life a ransom for man; to be made an offering for sin though he knew none; to be repaid for infinite love and goodness by ignominy and shame. Who can tell what it was for him who could raise the dead to descend to the tomb! No wonder his soul was for the moment clouded.

They passed, silent and sad, down the steep side of the Kedron—for the town gate was open that night as it was Passover week, and, crossing by the bridge, were on the road which leads over the Mount of Olives to Bethany. The noise of the multitude had passed away, and the world lay asleep under the great Passover-moon. The path wound between stone-walled orchards and gardens, which Titus was, hereafter, to find so many deadly battle-grounds, with the walls for ramparts. Jesus had gone each night to Bethany, but had no intention of doing so now, for he knew that his hour had come. Always given to solitary prayer, he had often turned aside to commune with his Father on one part or other of Olivet, and this night chose the stillness and shade of a spot which his presence made, henceforth, sacred for ever. An olive orchard lay near, known by the name of Gethsemane, or the "Oil-press." It was called so from a rock-hewn trough in it, in which the olives were trodden with the feet, the oil flowing into a similar trough below. The new leaves were opening over the branches as they passed, and the moonlight fell through their motionless network on the tender spring grass. Stillness, peace, solitude, filled earth and air; even the birds slept safely on the boughs under the great sky; for they, too, had a Heavenly Father. Moriah rose in richly wooded terraces behind.

crowned with the snow-white Temple, and, in front, the yellow slopes of Olivet swelled between Christ and the loved cottage of Bethany.

Amidst this quiet and beauty of nature he turned



GETHSEMANE AT THE PRESENT DAY.

aside, and entered the enclosure of Gethsemane, to strengthen his soul for the coming crisis. It was a fitting place—amidst olives, the emblems of peace!

A square garden with plastered walls, close by the

path to Bethany, under the shadow of the Temple hill, is still named as the spot. Venerable olive-trees are shown as the very witnesses of our Saviour's agony; but it is fatal to their claim, that Titus afterwards cut down all the trees round Jerusalem, for military use, and that the same fate has befallen the whole neighbourhood in later sieges. Yet the gnarled trunks, twenty to thirty feet high, the broad branches, and the still seclusion, at least reproduce the outward features of the scene, though the division of the garden into trim flower-beds gives the place a sadly modern appearance.

When the soul is overwhelmed it seeks to be alone, and yet not too far from human sympathy and help. To take all the Eleven with him into the depths of the garden would have disturbed his retirement. Only three, the most trusted—his long-tried and early followers, Peter, James, and John, were allowed to go with him beyond the first few steps. The others were to sit down and rest, while he went into the deeper shade to pray.

Accompanied by the three friends, he passed out of hearing of the rest, and presently, leaving even them behind, with the words, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death—tarry ye here and watch with me," went on about a stone's cast alone. And now the great pent-up sorrow burst forth. It had been gathering, no one knows how long, but the excitement of action had repressed it as yet—as the wind keeps a heavy raincloud from breaking. But, here, he was face to face with his own thoughts, and with the past and the future, and that in the night, and in such awful isolation. It seemed as if even heaven were as far from him as the sympathy of earth; as if even its lights had gone out. Must he bear all? Must the cup be drunk to the dregs? Could the hour not pass? Was it not possible for the Eternal Father to save him from it?

The sacred writers labour to describe the agony that overwhelmed him. They tell us that he first kneeled,

then fell on his face on the earth, and prayed with strong crying and tears,¹ till his sweat became, as it were, great drops of blood, falling down to the ground. He was "exceeding sorrowful," "sore amazed,"² "very heavy." His soul, as it were, sank under the vision that rose before it. "O my Father," he cried, "if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not my will, but Thine, be done." But as long as there was a cry for change, if possible, in the burden laid on him, there could be no peace. Rising from the ground, in his distress, human sympathy and presence seemed as if they would be a relief. He came therefore to the three, but only to find that, in his long supplications, they had sunk into deep sleep. Rousing Peter, lately so boastful, he gently reprov'd and warned him, and with him, the others. "What! could you not watch with me one hour? Watch, and pray as ye do so, that ye may not expose yourselves to temptation to be untrue to me, as I have said you would be. The spirit indeed is willing to stand by me faithfully, but human nature is weak, and if you heed not, will make you fall!"

Leaving them again, he once more prostrated himself in prayer: but the clouds were already breaking. Every desire or wish of his own was fading away like a troubled dream. "O my Father," cried he now, "if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, Thy will be done." Perfect peace of soul can only be found in absolute submission to the Will of God, and that he was fast attaining. Returning to the three—who knows for what?—he again found them asleep. They were losing, by their hour's sloth, the opportunity of cheering and helping their Master in his sorest trial. But the need of human comfort was passing away. Retiring, therefore, once more, and prostrating himself a third time, words of calm, child-like submission again rose from his lips. He had triumphed. He no longer

¹ Heb. v. 7.

² Mark xiv. 33.

craved a change, even if possible, in the Divine purposes. He thought no longer of himself, but of the perfect love and wisdom of the Father. He had ceased to have a wish; enough for him, henceforth, that Father's all-holy, all-wise, all-loving will. His spirit had broken through the cloud and reposed once more in the calm light of the face of God. The tempter had fled, and, in his place, as after the victory of the wilderness, we are told by St. Luke, "there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him."¹

Meanwhile Judas had been busy. Exposed, and dismissed by his Master, he had been the more set to carry out his miserable purpose.² Hastening to the authorities, he had reported that the favourable moment seemed to have come. Jesus had once more ventured into Jerusalem, and though it might not be safe to take him in the city, it would be easy to come upon him outside the walls, as he was in the habit of going each night, for prayer, to a spot at the foot of the Mount of Olives. The traitor meant Gethsemane.

Acting at once on his hints, the authorities continued in session till the arrest could be effected, sending part of the Temple police, with their clubs, to make it.³ Some of their officers, and even some of the chief priests and elders, accompanied them. The high-priest had, moreover, communicated with Pilate, representing, doubtless, that he proposed the arrest of a false Messiah, dangerous to the Roman power, and feared a rescue, and had secured a detachment of soldiers from Antonia, and these waited their orders. A body of the slaves of the upper priests, with lanterns and torches, to discover Jesus should he try to hide himself, led the way, behind Judas, who went foremost as guide. It was the full moon of April, but the trees and recesses might aid an attempt at escape.

¹ Luke xxii. 43.

² John xviii. 2-12; Matt. xxvi. 47-56; Mark xiv. 43-52; Luke xxii. 47-53.

³ Matt. xxvi. 55.

Jesus had just returned from his third prayer, and was rousing his disciples, when he heard the noise of the soldiers and the crowd, and saw their lights approaching.¹ The disappointment, at even his most trusted friends lying asleep when they should have watched, and leaving it to himself to discover Judas and his band, hurt him. With keen but gentle irony, therefore, he told them that they might sleep on now and take their rest, their watching was no longer needed. His hour had come. Then, speaking in a serious strain, he bade them "rise and go out with him, for the traitor was at hand."

Judas and his employers had utterly misjudged the character of Jesus. Knowing all that was before him, and now perfectly calm, he did not wait for his enemies, but, taking his disciples with him, went out of the garden enclosure to meet them. "Whom seek ye?" said he as they approached. "Jesus, the Nazarene," answered the foremost. To their confusion, the calm, self-possessed speaker presently told them that he was Jesus. Not a few in the Jewish crowd gathered before him, had heard him spoken of as a prophet, and, perhaps, regarded him as such. They had all heard of his miracles, and feared lest he might, possibly, use his awful powers against them now. From whatever cause, they fell back in confusion, overturning each other in their alarm. "Whom seek ye?" asked Jesus again. "Jesus, the Nazarene," muttered the boldest. "I told you," replied he, "that I am he; if you seek me, let these men, my disciples, go their way." He had said, that of those whom the Father had given him he had lost none,² and even in an earthly sense he would now protect them.

Fear as yet paralyzed the crowd. Jesus had calmly owned himself, but no one dared to lay hold of him. Judas might well dread that all would miscarry. But

¹ John xviii. 2-12; Matt. xxvi. 47-56; Mark xiv. 43-52; Luke xxii. 47-53.

² John xvii. 12; vi. 39.

he had promised a signal by which to point out his late Master, having arranged that he should go up to him and give him the customary kiss of a disciple to his teacher. Stepping out, therefore, from the crowd, as a disciple, he approached with a hypocritical "Hail, Rabbi," and kissed him tenderly. He knew, by long experience, that he might do so safely. To the calm and keen question of Jesus—"Good friend, for what have you come?"—he returned no answer; for what answer could he give? But he had gained his end; for those behind, encouraged by his remaining uninjured after such treachery, laid hold of Christ and bound him, without the least resistance on his part.

Now followed the only act of violence; for Peter could not see his Master thus led away, a prisoner, without a word or act on the part of his friends. "Lord, shall we smite them with the sword?" cried he; and without waiting an answer or thinking of the hopelessness of a rescue, he drew the sword he had hung by his side, and made a fierce cut at one of the slaves of the high-priest, fortunately only grazing the skull, but yet cutting off an ear. It was a splendidly heroic act, but sadly out of place under such a teacher. Turning to the wounded man, and at the same moment rebuking Peter, Jesus checked any evil results from the brave attack. "Suffer thus far," said he, and then touched the ear, and healed it. Forthwith, turning to Peter, he told him to sheathe the sword. "He who uses violence," added he, "will suffer violence. If you use the sword, you expose your lives to danger. Shall I not drink the cup which my Father hath given me? Thinkest thou that I cannot ask my Father, and He would send me, even now, more than twelve legions of angels—a legion for each of you—to protect me? But, then, that would not happen which the Scriptures have foretold I must undergo."

The disciples, after Peter's rash stroke, had abandoned all idea of resistance; and all took to flight

as soon as they saw their Master fairly in the hands of his enemies.

Surrounded on all sides, and firmly bound, as if his captors still feared that he would escape or be rescued, Jesus now turned to the priests and elders present, and calmly brought home to them their shame. "Are ye come out against me," said he, "as against a robber, with swords and clubs, to seize me? I was daily with you in the Temple, teaching, and you did not take me, but this is your hour, and the powers of evil work, by choice, in the dark. But, in all this, there is no chance; it happens only in fulfilment of the words of the prophets." He said no more, and allowed them to lead him away. The disciples were scattered, but one form hovered after them, white in the moonlight. It was that of a young man, who had, apparently, been roused from sleep by the tumult, and having thrown his white linen sleeping cloth round him in his haste, was following Jesus towards the city. Who he was must remain for ever unknown. Was it Mark himself, who alone relates it? Or one from the house probably attached to Gethsemane? Some have supposed him to have been Lazarus; others have had different conjectures; he was, at least, some faithful heart, eager to see what they would do with his Lord. The soldiers had let the apostles flee, having no orders to arrest them; but this strange figure attracted their attention, and they sought to lay hold on him. Casting off the cloth around him, however, he escaped out of their hands.

Yet there were friendly eyes following the sad scene, in the safe darkness of the night. Peter, and another of the apostles, who could only be John, had fled no further than safety demanded, and followed the crowd at a distance, unable to leave one they held so dear.

The great object with the authorities was to hurry forward the proceedings against their prisoner so quickly that they might hand him over to the Romans, as

already condemned, before the people could be roused on his side. They had so far gained their point.

On entering the city, Jesus was first led to the mansion of Hannas. He could see Jesus, and hear his defence, and advise his son-in-law how to act. His "snake-like" craft might help the less acute Caiaphas.

What passed before Hannas, or what hints he sent to Caiaphas, are not known. It may be that he simply passed on the prisoner to the legal high-priest at once, hastening to follow him, and secure his condemnation.

In the East, the houses of the great are rather a group of buildings of unequal height, near or above each other, with passages and open spaces between; the different structures having independent entrances and separate roofs. Such a house, or rather cluster of houses, has usually the form of a large hollow square, the four sides of which surround a roomy court; paved in some cases, in others, planted with trees. Sometimes an underground cistern, a spring, or a bath, offers the luxury of abundant water, and makes the court an agreeable spot for relaxation or refreshment. Porticos and galleries surround it, and furnish chambers for guests and entertainments. In some houses there is also a forecourt, enclosed from the street by walls, and, in all, the inner court is reached by an archway through the front building—"the porch," in the narrative of the Gospels.

The chief priests, with Caiaphas at their head, had been appointed to await, in his mansion or "palace," the result of the treachery of Judas; though their taking any such steps was irregular, for they formed no legal court or recognised tribunal. They were simply gathered, at the summons of the high-priest, in the blind excitement of fanaticism and passion, without any judicial standing. The chief Rabbis generally kept aloof from such violent proceedings, which were already too common, and left them to the Sadducees, but in this case all sections of the Sanhedrim felt alike, and were represented. But it was before a crowd, not a "court," that Jesus was brought.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE JEWISH TRIAL—THE DENIAL

PASSING through the porch, or archway, into the inner court, his captors led Jesus to one of the chambers opening from it, where his judges sat, ready to go through the mockery of a trial.¹ The Roman soldiers had been halted outside, for their presence would have been a defilement; but the Jewish serving-men went in with the prisoner, though only the few required accompanied him to the inner chamber.

The priests were masters of form, and knew how to make a show of justice while mocking the reality. In imitation of ancient usage, the judges before whom Jesus was led, sat turbaned, on cushions or pillows, in Oriental fashion, with crossed legs and unshod feet, in a half-circle; Caiaphas, as high-priest, in the centre, and the chief or eldest, according to rank, on each side. The prisoner was placed, standing, before Caiaphas; at each end of the semicircle sat a Scribe, to write out the sentence of acquittal or condemnation; some bailiffs, with cords and thongs, guarded the accused, while a few others stood behind, to call witnesses, and, at the close, to carry out the decision of the judges.

Nothing could be fairer, or more attractive, on paper, but on paper alone, than the rules for the trial of prisoners. The accused was in all cases to be held innocent, till proved guilty. It was a rule, that "the court was to save, not to destroy life." No one could be tried and condemned in his absence, and when

¹ Matt. xxvi. 57-8, 69-75; Mark xiv. 53-4, 66-72; Luke xxii. 54, 64; John xviii. 13-18, 25-27.

a person accused was brought before the court, it was the duty of the president, at the outset, to admonish the witnesses to remember the value of human life, and to take care that they forgot nothing that would tell in the prisoner's favour. Nor was he left undefended; a counsel was appointed for his protection. Whatever evidence tended to aid him was to be freely admitted, and no member of the court who had once spoken in favour of acquittal could afterwards vote for condemnation. The votes of the youngest of the judges were taken first, that they might not be influenced by their seniors. In capital charges, it required a majority of at least two to condemn, and while the verdict of acquittal could be given at once, that of guilty could only be pronounced the next day. Hence, capital trials could not begin on the day preceding a Sabbath, or public feast. No criminal trial could be carried through in the night; the judges who condemned any one to death had to fast all the day before, and no one could be executed on the day on which the sentence had been pronounced.

Rules so exact and so humane condemn the whole trial of Jesus, before Caiaphas, as an outrage. No accuser presenting himself, the judge himself took the office, in utter violation of all propriety. Witnesses against the prisoner alone appeared; for not a single witness in his defence was called, though the law gave such the preference. No counsel was assigned him, nor were any facilities provided, or even the possibility offered for his calling witnesses in his favour. The "court," from the first, sought to condemn; not as the law required, to acquit. There was no attempt, as was usual, to ascertain the trustworthiness of the evidence, nor any warning, beforehand, to those who gave it, of the gross sin of untruthfulness. So keenly, indeed, has the murder of Jesus been felt by the Jews, in later times, that the doctrine was afterwards invented that any one who gave himself out as a false Messiah, or who led the people astray from the doctrines of

their fathers, could be tried and condemned the same day, or in the night. Yet, in contradiction to this, the monstrous fable has also been coined, that a crier called aloud, through forty days before Christ's condemnation, for witnesses in his favour to come forward.

Caiaphas now, at last, had his enemy face to face. He would make him feel what it was to denounce the priesthood as he had done, and to hold them up to the obloquy of the nation. He had brought lasting odium on them by the contrast between his zeal and their neglect, in allowing abuses. The reformer who would turn the world upside down, was now standing bound before him, and he had him at his mercy. The rest of the judges had their own injuries to avenge, for had not the Scribes and Pharisees, teachers of the nation, been denounced with as unsparing contempt as the knot of high-caste Sadducees? Caiaphas had long made up his mind what to do. The form of a trial might be necessary, but the result was determined beforehand. He had already counselled both Sadducees and Pharisees to lay aside mutual disputes, and unite against Jesus, as one who endangered their common interests, and to sacrifice him without hesitation. Policy, he had urged, demanded that he be at once put to death, to prevent his overthrowing the Church. The sentence was thus proclaimed before Caiaphas took his seat that night; the judge had already openly said that he intended to condemn. The whole proceedings were, in fact, simply a piece of acting needed to secure the aid of the Roman executioner.

The proceedings began by Caiaphas, as he glanced at his prisoner, asking him various questions respecting his disciples and his teaching: Why he gathered so many followers? What he had meant by sending them through Galilee and Judea, announcing the coming of the Kingdom of God? Why, a few days before, at his entrance to the city, he had allowed the crowds to hail him as the Messiah? What he meant by all this?

Carefully avoiding any allusion to his disciples in his answer, for to have referred to them might have brought them into danger, Jesus answered that as to himself, the questions needed no reply; his life spoke for itself. "I have taught frankly and without reserve," said he; "I have no secret doctrines; I have spoken everything I had to teach, publicly, in the synagogues and schools of the land, before friends and enemies, and here in Jerusalem, in the Temple, where I had for hearers the people assembled from all parts. I have taught nothing secretly—nothing except in these public places. Why do you ask me? ask some of the multitudes who have heard me. They know what I have said to them, and what they say will weigh more with you than any words of mine. The Law requires that witnesses should first be examined in any trial."

But an honest inquiry, though necessary by the Law, was no part of the plan of Caiaphas and his confederates. That he should dare to direct the high-priest as to his duty, and presume to throw on the court the task of proving his guilt, was a fresh offence, and provoked fierce looks and angry words from the bench. The defence was at once rudely interrupted, for one of the attendants standing by—whether of his own accord, because he saw the feeling of the judges, or at a hint from Hannas or Caiaphas—in utter violation of judicial rules or common decency, struck the prisoner on the mouth, with his hand, to silence him. "Answerest thou the high-priest thus boldly?" said he. Nothing could have pleased the bench better, and they did not attempt to rebuke the offender. It failed, however, to disturb the calm self-possession and dignity of Jesus. "If I have spoken what is false," he replied, "prove that I have done so, but if what I say be right, why do you strike me thus? No one has a right to take the law in his own hands, much less a servant of the court."

The appeal to the known forms of trials had not been lost. Hostile witnesses had already been sought, to bring home to Jesus, if possible, some charge of false

doctrine or dangerous language, but none had been found. The only evidence to be had would not suffice, even in such an assembly, to establish a capital charge which the Romans would recognise. There were many, doubtless, who had heard him use words which had given the Rabbis offence—such as, “Thy sins are forgiven thee;” words regarded as blasphemy, and, therefore, punishable with death, by Jewish law; but they wanted to condemn him on a charge recognised by Roman law. They had tried by spies, for months back, to draw from him something which they could twist into an attack on the Roman government, but had failed.

Such evidence as they had was now however brought forward, in the hope that it would at least prove him to be “a deceiver of the people,” stirring them up, and exciting them against the laws of Moses,¹ as defined by the Rabbis. But it was a rule of Jewish law, that condemnation could only follow the testimony of, at least, two witnesses. Some, however, who came forward, had nothing of moment to say, and others contradicted themselves. His final discourses were, doubtless, the special crime in the eyes of his accusers. Little could be said about what had happened on his last entering Jerusalem, nor was even the driving out of the buyers and sellers from the Temple brought up, for the spirit that led to it was evidently noble, however the act itself might be challenged. The strong language against the priests and Rabbis offered a safer ground for accusation. Unfortunately for the judges, suitable witnesses were not to be found. At the best, those who came forward garbled, or misunderstood his words; as the priesthood themselves afterwards, before Pilate, twisted those respecting the tribute money into a directly untruthful sense.² But even thus, the testimony amounted to nothing. Time was passing dangerously fast, without anything having been done.

¹ Matt. xxvi. 60; Luke xxiii. 5.

² Luke xxiii. 2.

At last one witness appeared, who alleged that he had heard Jesus say, "Pull down this Temple, it is only the work of man, and I will in three days build another, not made with hands."¹ Others agreed that he had said words which seemed intended to bring the Temple into contempt; an offence so grave that it was afterwards made a capital charge against the first martyr, Stephen, that he had "spoken blasphemous words against this holy place;"² but their statements did not tally, and their witness was therefore worthless.

Meanwhile, Jesus had stood silent. Even to charges so hateful to Jewish ears as contempt of the Temple, he had made no answer. He knew it would be idle to speak before such a tribunal. To the judges, on the other hand, they seemed of the greatest weight. Caiaphas could no longer preserve calmness. Springing from his couch, and standing up in front of it,³ he demanded if Jesus had nothing to say in his own defence against all this. What did his silence mean? Was it a confession of guilt? But he still remained silent. The matter spoke for itself; the testimony given against him was worthless. If his past life could not secure his acquittal, mere words were vain. To use his own earlier saying, they would be pearls cast before swine, who would turn again and rend him. He would let violence and falsehood run their course. He would not recognise the tribunal, nor do honour to its members, for he knew that they were determined that he should die, innocent or guilty, to serve their own ends.

Caiaphas might have closed the examination at this point, and have taken the votes of the "Court." But with ready acuteness, he felt that the charge best sustained was an offence only in Jewish eyes; that the evidence in support of it was bad, and that the silence of the prisoner might not, after all, be an

¹ Mark xiv. 58.

² Acts vi. 13.

³ Mark xiv. 60.

admission of guilt. His pride, moreover, was touched by such an attitude towards himself, the primate, and he would force an answer, if possible, to save his own dignity. It would, besides, be better to go no further into matters which might lengthen the sitting and spoil the plot, by letting morning return before Jesus was in the safe hands of the Romans. True to the serpent cunning of the house of Hannas, he determined to bring things to a head, by worming out, if possible, what could be distorted into a civil offence.

Looking straight at the accused, he went straight to the heart of the matter, by the demand, uttered in Aramaic, which was used in the Jewish courts as the language of the nation, "I put you on your oath by the living God,¹ 'Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?'"

The supreme moment for publicly declaring himself had now arrived. With kingly dignity, in the face of certain death for his words, and in solemn answer to the appeal to "the living God" as to their truth, Jesus calmly replied: "If I tell you, ye will not believe, and if I ask questions that would prove my highest claims, you would not answer. You have said the Truth—I AM the Messiah—the Son of God, and Son of man. In my present guise ye will see me no more; but when ye have slain me, I, the Son of man, will forthwith sit on the right hand of the Majesty of God, and when ye see me next, I will be sitting there, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

This declaration might have seemed sufficiently clear, but the excitement of the judges had grown ungovernable. Rising on their cushions, one and all demanded, with loud voices, "Art thou, then, the Son of God?" "You have said it," replied Jesus, "AND I AM."

They had gained their end.

Caiaphas played his part well. Quivering with passion, and triumphant at his success, he forgot the

¹ Matt. xxvi. 63.

practised coldness of the Sadducee, and once more springing from his couch with well-feigned horror at the words of Jesus, though they were precisely what he had wished, rent the bosom of his priestly robe of fine linen, as if it were too narrow to let him breathe after hearing such blasphemy. He forgot that it was the worst of blasphemy for his own lips to use the name of God as a mere cloak for crime and wickedness!

"He has blasphemed!" cried Caiaphas. "What need is there to hear more witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy from his own lips. He gives himself out as the Son of God. What seems good to you, my colleagues?"

All voted that, on his own confession, Jesus was worthy of death.

They had, at last, their wish. Charges affecting the Temple, or Judaism, would have raised only the contemptuous laugh of the Roman governor. But now that Jesus had claimed to be the Messiah, he could be represented to Pilate as a State criminal, delivered up for treason against the emperor.

The first examination was over, but it needed to be confirmed by a larger gathering of the Church authorities. It was about three o'clock in the morning, and some hours must elapse before the sentence could be formally signed.

Meanwhile, Jesus was left in charge of the rough Temple police, while the judges separated for an hour or two of sleep. There was nothing, now, to restrain the coarse natures to whom the condemned prisoner had been consigned. One under sentence of death was always, in these rough ages, the sport and mockery of his guards, and those in charge of Jesus, made worse than common by the example of the judges, vented their cruelty on him with the rudest brutality. They were fierce bigots, and since he was to die as a false prophet, they treated him as such, racking their ingenuity to invent insult and injury. Having blind-

folded him, some struck him violently on the head with their fists, or perhaps with the vine-stick which Roman centurions and other officials carried as their sign of rank, and were wont to use on the face or head of the soldiers—for some of the captors of Jesus had such staves with them. Others struck him with their open hands, while still others, adding the greatest indignity an Oriental could offer, spat in his face; crying, as they did so, "Prophecy to us, thou Messiah, who was it that did it?" The hands they had bound had healed the sick and raised the dead; the lips they smote had calmed the winds and the waves. One word, and the menials now sporting with him at their will would have perished. But, as he had begun and continued, he would end—as self-restrained in the use of his awful powers in his own behalf, as if he had been the most helpless of men. Divine patience and infinite love knew no wearying. He had but to will it and he would walk free; but he came to die for man, and he would not shrink from doing so.

While his examination had been proceeding, the central court, which seems to have been paved, was the waiting-place of the servants of the several judges, and of the underlings of the high-priest, and the Temple watch. John and Peter, recovering from their first panic, and anxious to see what became of their Master, had followed at a distance, till he was brought to the house of Caiaphas. The door of the outer court, or porch, had been closed, to prevent the entrance of any one likely to spread an alarm and bring about a rescue; but John, happening to be known to the household, or, perhaps, to the high-priest himself, was readily admitted. Meanwhile, Peter remained shut out, but at John's request was admitted by the maid who kept the door.

A fire of wood kindled in the open court in the chilly April night, had attracted all round it, Peter among the rest, by its cheerful blaze. He sat by the light with a sad heart, wondering what the end would

be, and not without alarm for his own safety, in case he should be recognised and charged with his violence in the garden. Meanwhile, the door-keeper, who, perhaps, had seen him in attendance on Jesus, sauntered like others, to the fire, and with a woman's abruptness, after gazing at him steadily, put the question directly to him: "Art thou, also, one of this man's disciples?" Confused and off his guard, he said nothing; but she would not let him go. "Thou, also, wast with Jesus of Galilee," she continued—repeating to those round her, "Certainly this man, also, was with him." "Woman," said Peter, stammering out the words in mortal terror for his life, "I do not know him; I do not know what you mean." But his conscience was ill at ease, and his fears grew apace. He could no longer hide his confusion, and went off, into the darkness of the porch. His tormentor would not, however, let him escape. He had hardly come to the light again, after a time, than she once more scanned him, and, determined to justify herself, began to speak of him to the serving-men and slaves. "He *is* one of them. He *was* with Jesus of Nazareth." Irritated and alarmed, and losing all presence of mind, he repeated his denial with an oath. "I do not know the man. I am not one of his disciples. I swear I am not."

His stout assertions gave him an hour's respite and peace, but his troubles were not over, for the maid had called attention to him, and his bearing had excited suspicion. At last, one of the slaves of the high-priest, a kinsman of the wounded Malchus, renewed the subject by asking Peter directly, "Did I not see thee, as I was standing at the door of the garden, just as they were coming out?" "You never did," said Peter, "I was not there." "Why, your very speech shows that you are one of them—you *were* with him," cried angry, fierce voices; "you are a Galilean—we hear it in your words."

Peter now lost all control of himself. He had tried to strengthen his last denial by a solemn oath, but now burst into curses on himself, if he had not spoken truth,

in saying that he knew nothing whatever about Jesus! In the midst of his excitement a cock-crow fell on his ears, and, at the sound, his Master, still before the court, in a room opening into the courtyard, turned and looked him full in the face, with loving but reproachful eyes.

It was enough. The glance, like lightning revealing an abyss, brought back to its nobler self the honest heart that for a time had been alarmed into unfaithfulness, and threw an awful glare into the depths of sin on whose edge he stood. All his weakness and wretched fear rose in his thoughts, and, with them, the remembrance of his boastings, so miserably belied.¹ Christ's words, which he had so warmly repudiated—that, before the cock crew, he would deny him thrice—had come true. What a contrast between the grand strength of his Master and his own weakness!

Shame and sorrow, and almost a despair of forgiveness, overpowered him, and he did now, what he should have done earlier, went out, and wept bitterly. It is a touching and beautiful tradition, that all his life long the remembrance of this night never left him, and that, morning by morning, he rose at the hour when the look of his Master had entered his soul, to pray once more for pardon.

Towards the close of the fourth watch, and before daybreak, the heads of the Church, true to the rule which required that they should meet as a body, to ratify a sentence of death, had gathered in some suitable building. Thither Jesus was now led, under escort of Temple police and retainers of the high-priest, to appear before the notables of Israel. The chiefs of the priestly courses and other dignitaries of the Temple, with a number of elders and Rabbis, had gathered in the fading darkness, old though most of them were, to take part in the official condemnation. The proceedings were, however, only formal—to hear the sentence of the "Court" and to endorse it. This done, the way was clear for handing Jesus over to Pilate.

¹ Matt. xxvi. 57, 58, 69-75; Mark xiv. 53, 54, 66-72; Luke xxii. 54-62; John xviii. 13-18, 25-27.

CHAPTER XXXIV

BEFORE PILATE

THE decision of the Jewish authorities having been duly signed and sealed, and Jesus once more securely bound, he was led off, strongly guarded, to the palace of Pilate, on Mount Zion. It was hardly day, but Eastern life begins very early, for the heat of noon requires rest during the hours busiest with us. The way ran from the West Hall of the Temple, over the valley, by a bridge, and across an open space surrounded by pillared porches. The palace of Herod, now Pilate's head-quarters, lay just beyond.

Now, for the first time, Jesus entered the gates of a king's palace—the home of “men in soft raiment”—entered it as a prisoner.¹ He was to stand before a man who has come down to us as one of the most unrighteous, cruel, arbitrary, and hateful: a man rightly named Pilate, the “Javelin-man,” for it seemed his delight to launch cruelties and scorn on every side, like javelins, among the oppressed people. What had Our Lord to expect from one who hated the Jews, and sported with their lives and possessions as if they were a race of slaves? Yet, possibly, this abhorrence of the nation might see in Jesus a welcome instrument, in the absence of a better, for playing off his bitterness against it and its leaders. To favour a man who was in opposition to them was, itself, a pleasure. Calm and impartial, compared to the Jews, and in some respects in sympathy with the accused, the hard, proud, heathen

¹ Matt. xxvii. 1, 2, 11-14; Mark xv. 1-5; Luke xxiii. 1-5; John xviii. 28-38.

Roman was more open than they to the impression of Christ's transparent innocence.

That he did not, in the end, protect him, rose, partly, from his character, and, partly, from his past history as governor. Morally weak, he was incapable of righteous firmness, and, besides, he dreaded complaints at Rome from the Jewish authorities, and insurrections of the masses. He had, in the past, learned so often to quail before the national stubbornness, that he would permit, or do, almost anything, for quiet. This soon showed itself. Protecting Jesus for a time, half in sympathy, half in mockery, he finally gave him up, rather than brave the demand of a people he hated and feared. He would have set him free but for the popular clamour, and a bitter remembrance of the trouble similar incidents had caused him both in Jerusalem and at Rome.

There was a hall in the palace, in which trials were generally conducted, but the Jewish notables who had condemned Jesus, would not enter it, that they might not be defiled, for though Jesus had eaten the Passover the night before, they and the nation were yet to eat it on the coming evening.¹

They were still true to the character given them by Jesus; careful of the outside of the bowl and platter, though, within, it should be filled with wickedness. They had effected their end, Christ was in the hands of the Romans before Jerusalem awoke.

Knowing the people with whom he had to do, Pilate made no attempt to overcome their scruples. Trials in the open air were common, for Roman law courted publicity. Roman governors, and the half Roman Herod and his sons, often held their tribunals before the palace, in the market-place, in the theatre, in the circus, or even on the highways. Pilate, therefore, caused his official seat to be set down on what was called in Jerusalem Gabbatha, "the high place," from its

¹ John xviii. 28.

being raised above the crowd,—and “The Pavement,” because, as was the custom with the spot on which Roman judges sat, it was laid with a mosaic of coloured stones. It was, very possibly, a permanent erection, square, or of crescent shape, of costly marble, in keeping with the splendour so dear to Herod its builder, and seems to have been raised in front of the “Judgment Hall;” a doorway connecting the two. It was a maxim of Roman law that criminal trials should be held on a raised tribunal, that all might see and be seen.

The ivory chair of the governor—his seat of state and sign of office—or, perhaps, the old golden seat of Archelaus, was set down on this platform, which was large enough to allow the other members of the court—Roman citizens—to sit beside Pilate, for Roman law required their presence. On lower elevations sat the officers of the court, the friends of the governor, and others whom he chose to honour.

The priests and elders who appeared against Jesus, now led him up the steps of the tribunal, to Pilate, and placed him in his presence. Chairs for the accusers were generally set near that of the judge, and there was also, usually, a seat for the accused; but in Judea, despised and insulted, this custom was not now observed, at least in the case of Christ, for he had to stand through the trial. An interpreter was not needed, as the Jewish officials doubtless spoke Greek, and Jesus, brought up in Galilee, where the presence of foreigners made its use general, also understood it. A detachment of troops from the garrison guarded the tribunal and kept the ground,¹ for a vast crowd of citizens and others speedily gathered, as the news of the arrest spread.²

Roman law knew nothing of the system which forces a prisoner to convict himself; it required that a formal accusation should be made against him. To give the charges the greater weight³ this office of accuser Caia-

¹ Matt. xxvii. 27.

² Matt. xxvii. 20.

³ Matt. xxvii. 12.

phas undertook, as the representative of the nation and head of the Sanhedrim, though a professional "orator"¹ may also have been employed, as was usual.

Pilate, having taken his seat, began the proceedings by asking Caiaphas and his colleagues what accusation they had against the prisoner.²

"If he had not been a great offender," replied Caiaphas, as spokesman, "we would not have delivered him up to thee. We have authority, by our own laws, to punish ordinary offenders; but this man's crime goes beyond our powers in the punishment it demands, and we have, therefore, handed him over to thee.³ That we have done so, I submit, is proof that he deserves death. The presence of myself, the high-priest, and of the notables of the nation, as his accusers, may suffice to prove the blackness of his guilt."

Pilate was not a stranger in Palestine, and Jesus had, doubtless, already been under his notice, through reports of his spies and officials. He had learned that he avoided all appeals to force; that his discourses had nothing whatever political in them, and that his zeal was mainly directed against the corruptions of the Jewish priesthood and public teachers, whom the Romans themselves despised for the same cause. The immense crowds that had followed him at his first appearance in Judea, three years before, and his subsequent course in Galilee, must have been the subject of many official communications to Cæsarea, Pilate's usual residence; and they had uniformly represented him as peaceful and harmless. Pilate knew, therefore, that he was now delivered up by the priests and Rabbis, only from envy⁴ and for their own selfish ends. He could easily see how such a man might be dangerous to the influence of the Jewish magnates, while not at all so to Roman authority.

The Gospels give only a brief outline of the trial, but even the opening address of Caiaphas, or the orator who

¹ Acts xxiv. 1.

² John xviii. 29.

³ John xviii. 30.

⁴ Mark xv. 10.

spoke for him and his party, was, no doubt, full of compliments to Pilate, and of fierce words against the prisoner. It had, however, a different effect on the governor from that intended. The clamour for blood by a priesthood whom he despised as Jews, and still more for their superstition, bigotry, barbarous want of taste and refinement, restless greed, and restive opposition to Rome, was hateful and repulsive. He would not involve his court, which represented the majesty of the emperor, in any further details of a question about one who seemed a mere religious reformer. The accusers had, themselves, power to settle their own religious disputes.

Interrupting the speaker, therefore, Pilate told him, "If you have found him what you say, you had better, in my opinion, take him and judge him according to your own law."¹ He did not, as yet, understand that they sought to have Jesus put to death.

Caiaphas had his answer ready. "It is a *criminal* charge," said he, "a charge of capital crime, and we cannot put any one to death without your confirming our sentence."² Pilate could not, however, do so in any case, without a trial, and thus the matter must proceed before him. The Jews might have stoned Jesus for blasphemy, had he sanctioned their doing so, but they were resolved to leave the odium of the murder on him, and have their victim crucified.

"What is your accusation then?" asked Pilate.

Craftily keeping out of sight Christ's declaration that he was the Son of God, because such a question was indifferent to the Roman, Caiaphas turned the religious offence into a political one. Our Lord's claim to be the Messiah was to be used to alarm Pilate and prejudice him against the prisoner, the word being equivalent in the mind of the Romans to a wild revolutionary leader.

Roman law permitted the questioning of a prisoner

¹ John xviii. 31.

² John xviii. 31, 32.

after formal accusation, and confession of the charge was held sufficient proof of guilt.

"The accused has been condemned by us as a deceiver of the people," answered the high-priest.¹

"How?" asked Pilate.

"In a double way," said Caiaphas. "He stirs up the nation against paying their tribute to Cæsar, and he sets himself up as King of the Jews. He says he is the Messiah, which is the name we give our king, and he has led many to regard him as a descendant of David, and our lawful sovereign."

Rising from his chair, and ordering Jesus, who had been standing at his side, to be brought after him, Pilate retired into the palace, and calling Christ before him, asked him, "Art *thou* the King of the Jews? Dost thou, really, claim to be so?" He evidently felt it almost beneath him to put such a question to one, in his eyes, so utterly unlike a king. Had he been firm and strong-minded, he would have seen the groundlessness of the charge, but he weakly proceeded to put Jesus to examination.

Knowing that Pilate had nothing against him but the words of his enemies outside, Jesus, with a calm dignity that amazed the governor, replied by a counter question. "Do you ask this of your own accord, or have others told it you of me?"² He would have Pilate remember the more than doubtful source of the accusation, and that, with all his official means of information, no grounds of such a charge had ever suggested themselves to his own mind. It was, besides, essential to know if he spoke as a Roman, with a political use of the title "king," or repeated it in the Jewish sense, as equivalent to "the Messiah."

"Do you think I am a *Jew*?" answered Pilate scornfully, feeling his false position in entertaining an accusation from so suspicious a source. "Your own nation and the chief priests have brought you before

¹ Luke xxiii. 2.

² John xviii. 34.

me. Tell me, what have you done? Do you call yourself the King of the Jews?"

"In your sense of the word I am not a king," answered Jesus; "but in another, I am. But my Kingdom is not of this world¹—not earthly and political. If it were, my attendants would have fought for me, to prevent my being delivered up to the Jews. But they made no resistance, or any attempt even to rescue me, and this, of itself, is enough to show that my Kingdom is not a political one."

"You speak of a Kingdom; are you really a king, then, in any *other* sense than the common?" asked the governor, awed.

"Thou sayest it;² so it is; I AM A KING," answered Jesus. "I was born to be a King; I came into the world that I should bear witness for the Truth. All who love and seek the Truth,—that is, who hear and obey my words—are my subjects."

"How these Jews talk!" thought Pilate. "They, barbarous as they are, think they have TRUTH as their special possession—TRUTH, which is a riddle to our philosophers! What have I to do with such things, fit only to confuse the head of a hungry Greek or a beggarly Rabbi?" But he had heard enough to convince him that Jesus had no thought of treason against Rome, or of stirring up a disturbance in the country. Hardened, cold, worldly, he would fain have dismissed One so strangely different from other men—an enthusiast, willing to die to make men better! "What kind of a man is he?" thought the Roman. "If he only had not been so ready with his talk about being a king! But he will do nothing to help himself!" "What *is* Truth?" said he, and turned away without waiting an answer, for in Pilate's opinion, as in that of most men of his class in that age, no one could give a reply to the question.

Leaving Jesus to be brought out again after him

¹ John xviii. 36.

² Matt. xxvii. 11; Mark xv. 2; Luke xxiii. 3; John xviii. 37.

to the tribunal, he returned to the accusers and the multitude. Touched by the prisoner's self-possession and dignity, half-afraid of One who spoke only of Truth, and of other worlds than this, and incensed that the Jewish authorities, for their own ends, should have sought to palm off on him a harmless enthusiast as a dangerous traitor, he threw them into fierce confusion, by frankly telling them "that he had examined Jesus, and found no ground for any punishment¹ in his thinking himself the Messiah, as they called it. One point in the accusation had failed, but it was necessary to hear what might be alleged besides. The accusers could easily see that, in spite of the admission of Jesus that he claimed to be a king, Pilate regarded him rather with pity than fear. More must be done to fix on him the crime of being dangerous to the State. The accusers were greatly excited. One after another, they sprang up, with charge upon charge, to confirm their main accusation. They had not scrupled to speak of a purely religious movement as a dark political plot, and now they were bold enough even to adduce proofs of this treason. "He has perverted women and children, and has stirred up the whole nation against Caesar. From Galilee to Jerusalem there is not a town or village where he has not won over some, and filled them with wild expectations. He has appealed to the nation to join his Kingdom; he has spoken against paying the taxes; he is a second Judas the Galilean, and you know what *he* cost Rome in blood and treasure." The hypocrites! They were demanding his death on the pretext that he had threatened to use *force* to establish his Kingdom, when the truth was, his real offence, in their eyes, was that he would *not* use force!²

Such a storm of accusations might well have led Pilate to expect some denial or disproofs from Jesus. He doubtless attributed all the difficulty of the situa-

¹ John xviii. 38.

² Luke xxiii. 4, 5.

tion to a foolish claim of some dreamy kingship; and, on every ground, even for his own sake, to clear him from a business that grew more and more serious, hoped to hear some defence. But Christ knew with whom he had to do. He knew his enemies were determined that he should die, and would invent charge after charge till he was destroyed. They scrupled at nothing. He knew Pilate—fierce, and yet cowardly, the tyrant, and yet the sport of the Jewish authorities.¹ Despising the moral worthlessness of judge and accusers alike, he would not utter even a word in his own behalf before them. They knew his life and work, and if the witness these bore were of no weight, he would add no other. “If *I* demand that he answer,” thought Pilate, “perhaps he will do so. Do you not hear,” said he, “of how many things they accuse you? Do you make no defence at all?” But Jesus remained silent, not uttering even a word. “A very strange man,” thought Pilate. He seemed to him, more than ever, a lofty enthusiast, blind to his own interests, and careless of life.

The word “GALILEE,” in the wild cries of the priests and Rabbis, raised a new hope in Pilate’s mind. Antipas was now in Jerusalem at the feast. If Jesus were a Galilean, it would be a graceful courtesy to send him to be tried before his own prince, and might efface the grudge Antipas had at Pilate himself, for having let loose his soldiers lately on the Galilean pilgrims in the Temple, during a disturbance; some being cut down at the very altar. It would, moreover, get him clear of a troublesome matter, and, perhaps, it might even save the strange man—so calm, so dignified, in circumstances of such weakness and humiliation; with such a look, as if he read one’s soul; with such a mysterious air of greatness, even in bonds, and in the very face of death by the cross. Antipas would hardly yield to the Temple party, as he himself might be forced to do,

¹ Matt. xxvii. 12-14; Mark xv. 35.

to avoid another complaint to Rome. He no sooner, therefore, heard that Jesus was a Galilean, than he ordered him to be transferred to Antipas, that he might become his judge.

The old palace of the Jewish kings, in which Antipas lodged, was not far from Pilate's splendid official residence.¹ It lay a few streets off, to the north-east, within the same old city wall, on the slope of Zion, the levelled crest of which was occupied by the vast palace of Herod, now the Roman head-quarters. Both were in the old, or Upper City, and through the narrow streets, the sides of which were higher than the middle, Jesus was led under escort of a detachment of Roman troops. The accusers had no choice but to follow, and the multitude went off with them, for it was no ordinary spectacle to see the high-priest and all the great men of the city, thus in public together.

The vassal king was caught in Pilate's snare. It was a delicate flattery to refer a Galilean case to him, and his light nature was no less gratified by having one brought before him of whom he had heard so much. He had never seen a miracle, and should like to be able to say he had. It would break the dulness, and give an hour's talk. A prisoner, in danger of the cross, could not refuse to humour him, if he commanded him to perform one! He had been afraid of Jesus once, but a miracle-worker in chains, could only be, at best, a clever juggler.

Pilate had taken his seat on his tribunal in the grey dawn, and an hour had passed. It was shortly after six, when Antipas, early astir, like all Orientals, heard the commotion in the courtyard of his palace, and received word that Jesus had been handed over to his authority. A few minutes more, and the prisoner was led in, and presently Antipas made his appearance.

The weak, crafty, worthless man, was disposed to be very condescending. He put question after question

¹ Luke xxiii. 6-12.

to Christ as his idle curiosity suggested, and doubtless commanded him to perform a miracle there and then. But Jesus was no conjurer. He was ready to save his life by worthy means, but he would not, for a moment, stoop to anything ignoble. Antipas was the murderer of John, the slave of a wicked woman, and a mean adulterer. He felt, therefore, only utter disdain for him, and treated him with withering silence. He might tire himself with questions, but not a word of reply would be vouchsafed. The tetrarch began to feel that it was no time to indulge his humour, and grew half-alarmed.

The chief priests and Scribes, Caiaphas at their head, would gladly have turned his annoyance to their own account, and broke out into vehement accusations, when his questions ceased; forgetful, in their rage, alike of their office and of their self-respect. But they, too, were met with the same contemptuous silence, which gave no chance of fastening anything on their enemy, by admissions of his own. Antipas was no less at a loss than Pilate what to do. One thing, alone, he had resolved—he would take no part in condemning so mysterious a man. Was he afraid of the large following Jesus already had in Galilee? Was he spell-bound and awed by those eyes, that calmness, that kingly dignity? Was he afraid of the very power of which he had craved some exhibition? When there was no Herodias at hand to make him the tool of her revenge, he was rather a mere man of pleasure than cruel.¹

Treated so strangely before his courtiers; humbled and baffled, he covered his defeat and alarm by a pretence of contemptuous ridicule. The harmless madman, who claimed to be a king, would make a fine butt for the humour of his guard. Let them trick him out as a king, and play at homage to him, and see how he would bear his shadowy dignities! He knew, by this time, Pilate's opinion of the accused, and

¹ Matt. xiv. 9.

suspected why he had sent him, but meanwhile he and his soldiers set themselves to try their wit on this ridiculous pretender to a crown! Tired at last, nothing remained but to send him back to Pilate, and let *him* finish what he had begun. It was undesirable to meddle further in what might prove a very troublesome matter. Having, therefore, put gorgeous apparel on him, in mockery of such a king,¹ he sent him back to the governor.

Pilate had already made one vain attempt to save him, and now, anxious to end the matter, summoned the accusers once more to the tribunal. A great crowd had gathered, mostly citizens, furious against the alleged enemy of the Temple by which they lived. Looking at Jesus again, standing before him in the humble dress of the people—for they had already stripped him of his robe of mockery—Pilate felt more convinced than ever that he was no rebel. "I have examined this man," said he, "and nothing worthy of death has been done by him. Still more, I sent him to Herod, and he is of the same opinion, and has sent him back again to me uncondemned. But since so much trouble has been caused by his fancies, he deserves some punishment. I shall, therefore, order him to be scourged and then dismissed. It will be a warning to him." The proposal was a mere salve to the pride of his accusers, wounded by the refusal of their demand for a sentence of death.

Meanwhile an ominous cry arose in the crowd. It was the custom to carry out capital sentences at the Feast times, that the people at large might get a lesson; but it was also usual to honour the Passover, by releasing any prisoner condemned to death whom the multitude might name.

Coming forward, therefore, and addressing both accusers and people, Pilate reminded them that he always released a prisoner at the Passover. His intimation

¹ Luke xxiii. 13-25; Matt. xxvii. 15-26; Mark xv. 6-15; John xviii. 39, 40.

was hailed with shouts, which for once pleased him; for he fancied that, this time, there could be no question who should receive pardon. One who claimed to be their national king, and had attracted so much notice, would, he assumed, be gladly accepted. He called out to the people, therefore, whether they would like "Jesus, their king," to be the prisoner set free.

At this time, there lay, awaiting execution, one Barabbas—the son of a Rabbi—who had, apparently, been concerned in a tumult, during which some Roman sympathisers or soldiers had been killed; such "rebels" being denounced as "robbers."

The proposal of Pilate threatened to overthrow the scheme of the heads of the Church, and, unless opposed on the instant, might catch the popular fancy, and be accepted. Caiaphas and his party, therefore, with quick presence of mind, turned attention from it, by calling to the crowd to "Ask him to release Barabbas, and not this man." It was a clever stroke, for Barabbas had been condemned for an offence which made him a martyr in the eyes of the people. He had risen against the abhorred Roman. He was jealous for the Temple and the Law, while Jesus was the enemy of things as they were, opposed tradition and rites, and demanded reforms.

The cry for Barabbas, therefore, raised and vehemently repeated by the high-priest and those around him, was presently caught up by all with wild yells to have "the patriot" released, instead of Jesus. Pilate was under no obligation to give the people their choice, but had fancied he might appeal to them from the priests and Scribes, and play them off against their leaders. But the cry for Barabbas was kept up so fiercely, by these, and, to Pilate's regret, so echoed by the multitude, that he saw he had failed. A popular tumult seemed rising. Everything promised another scene like that at Cæsarea, about the standards set up in Jerusalem, when the cries of the multitude were not to be silenced even by fear of death, and forced Pilate, in the end, to yield.

To add to his perplexity, he had scarcely seated himself to receive the popular decision, when a message came to him from his wife, which, under the circumstances, must have greatly impressed him. Since the time of Augustus, Roman magistrates had been permitted to take their wives to the provinces, and tradition has handed down the wife of Pilate—whose name it states was Procla—as a convert to the Jewish faith. She had evidently heard of Jesus, and, having taken a lively interest in him, was greatly troubled at his arrest. Her messenger, hastening to Pilate, now whispered an entreaty from her, that he would have nothing to do with condemning this just man; she had suffered many things through the night in a dream because of him, and feared Divine vengeance if he were condemned.

Pilate was at a loss what to do. Unwilling to give way to the mob, and let loose a fierce enemy of Rome instead of a harmless and evidently high-minded enthusiast; certain that the high-priests had accused him only from envy at his influence with the people, and hatred of him for his opposition to themselves; half afraid, moreover, especially after his wife's message, to meddle further in the matter; he once more turned to the crowd, who were still shouting "Not this man, but Barabbas," and attempted to carry his point, and save Jesus.

"Which of the two," cried he, "do you really wish me to release to you?" "Barabbas, Barabbas," roared the multitude. The cry raised by the priests had carried all before it. "What shall I do then," asked Pilate, pale before the storm, "with Jesus, whom you call the Messiah—the King of the Jews?" He hoped that the sound of titles so dear to their hearts, and so flattering to their pride, would have some effect. But he was bitterly deceived.

For now, for the first time, rose, in answer to him, the fearful words, "To the Cross! Crucify him! crucify him!" the priests and Scribes, prelates and doctors of the nation, on the raised platform of the tribunal,

shouting first, and the mob below re-echoing the cry far and wide.

Pilate had failed twice, but he still held out. Appealing a third time to the excited crowd, he strove to reason with them:—

“Why shall I crucify him? What evil has he done? He has broken no law. I have found no cause to put him to death. I will, therefore, only scourge him, and let him go.”

The sea of upturned faces again broke into wild uproar, a thousand voices yelling at their fiercest, “Crucify him! crucify him!”

“It will be another uproar like that at Cæsarea,” thought he; “I must yield while I can, and save myself.” Poor mockery of a ruler! Set by the Eternal to do right on earth, and afraid to do it; strong enough in his legions, and in the truth itself, to have saved the Innocent One, and his own soul, he could only think of what seemed best at the moment!

Not daring, in his weakness, to play the man and do right, he was yet determined that even those at a distance, who might not hear his disavowal of any willing share in the condemnation of Christ, should be made to see it. To wash the hands in water is a symbol so expressive of having no share in an action, that it had been adopted by Jews and heathen alike. So long before as the days of Moses, the elders of a city near which the body of a slain man had been found, were required to wash their hands over a slaughtered heifer, and declare their innocence.¹ To wash the hands in innocency was already a common expression in the days of David.² Calling, therefore, for water, Pilate went towards his official chair, and with significant gestures, washed his hands, calling aloud as he did so, “That as his hands were clean before them, so was he himself, of all guilt in the blood of this man. It is on you; you may answer for it as you best can!”

¹ Deut. xxi. 6, 7.

² Ps. xxvi. 6; lxxiii. 13.

"Yes! yes!" cried the priests and rabble, "willingly! His blood be on us and on our children!"

"Then you may have his blood," thought Pilate; "I have done my best to save him!" So do men deceive themselves; as if they could wash their conscience clean as easily as their hands!

Jesus had gained nothing by all the windings and doublings of Pilate. It had been proposed to save him from death by delivering him over to the shame and agony of scourging. He was now to be both scourged and crucified.

Victims condemned to the cross first underwent the hideous torture of the lash, and this Pilate, forthwith, commanded to be inflicted. "Go, bind his hands and let him be beaten" was the order for this terrible infliction.

Jesus was now seized by some of the soldiers standing near,¹ and after being stripped to the waist, was bound in a stooping posture, his hands behind his back, to a post, or block, near the tribunal, to be beaten at the pleasure of the soldiers, with knots of rope, or plaited leather throngs armed at the ends with acorn-shaped drops of lead, or small, sharp-pointed bones. In many cases not only was the back cut open in all directions; even the eyes, the face, and breast, were torn, and the teeth not seldom knocked out.

Under the fury of the countless stripes, the victims sometimes sank unconscious—amidst screams, convulsive leaps, and distortions; sometimes died on the spot; sometimes were taken away, a mass of bleeding flesh, to find deliverance from their agony in death. What Jesus must have endured is pictured to us by one of the Fathers. "All around were horrified to see them (the martyrs), so torn with scourges that their very veins were laid bare, and the inner muscles, and sinews, and even the very bowels, exposed."

This torture over—Pilate, as his office required,

¹ Matt. xxvii. 26-30; Mark xv. 15-19; John xix. 1-3.

standing by—Jesus was formally delivered to a military officer, with the order to see him crucified. He had been scourged in the open ground before the palace gate, but was now led, still half-naked, into the inner court of the palace, in which, as the trial was over, all the soldiers—no longer needed outside—were massed, to be ready for any attempt at rescue. His guards now put some of his clothes on the quivering body. For this his own humble under garments contented them, in part; but the brutal humour of the guard-room was free to vent itself on a condemned man, and the lofty claims of Christ, as well as his hated nationality, excited it to the keenest. Instead of his plain tunic of linen, therefore, they threw over his shoulders a soldier's scarlet cloak, as a rough burlesque of the long and fine purple one worn only by the emperor. One of them, running to the nearest open space, heightened the coarse merriment by bringing in some of the tough twigs of a thorny plant, which he twisted into a mock laurel wreath, like that worn at times by the Cæsars, and forced down, with its close sharp thorns, on our Saviour's temples. A last supreme touch, to complete the ridicule, was at hand, in one of the long reeds, used in many ways in Jewish houses, and hence easily procured. Placed in his hand, the mock king had a sceptre! It only remained to pay him a show of homage, and this they did on their knees, saluting him with, "Hail, King of the Jews." The courtyard rang with peals of laughter. Some of the more brutal could not, however, let things pass so lightly. He was a Jew; he had claimed to be a king, in opposition, as they fancied, to the emperor, and he was about to be crucified. They indulged their coarseness, therefore, by tearing the stout cane-like reed from his hands, and striking him with it over the face and head. Others struck him rudely with their fists: some, in their contempt, even spitting on him as they did so.

This long passage of insult and mockery was one of

the sore trials of these last sad hours. Yet, through the whole, no complaint escaped his lips. He was being insulted, maltreated, and mocked, though already torn by the scourges. But no murmur rose from him. He might have implored pity; he might have appealed to Pilate's reluctance to condemn him. A heart beats even in the roughest bosom. But he was silent. He had been bowed and crushed in Gethsemane, but he now felt the serene joy of perfect resignation to the will of his Father. He was fulfilling, by calm endurance, the work of his life, in accordance with the eternal counsels of God, and in holy love for his nation and the world.

Pilate had, apparently, retired into the palace for a time, but now re-appeared; urged, perhaps, by his wife, to make one more effort to save him. Yet he might have prevented the pitiless roughness of the soldiers had he pleased, and the scourging itself was an injustice, by his own confession. He now ordered him to be brought out once more, tottering with pain and weakness, wearing the scarlet cloak and the crown of thorns, and covered, besides, with the vile proofs of contempt and violence. Even the stony heart of Pilate was touched.

"Behold," said he, "I have brought him out to you again, that you may know, once more, that I have found no fault in him."¹ Then, turning to the figure at his side, drawn together with mortal agony, and looking at the pale, worn, and bleeding face, which might touch even the heart of Jews, he added, "Behold the man!" Would they let the scourging and mockery suffice, after all?

But the priests were unmoved. The sight of their victim redoubled their ferocity. Forgetful of their profession and dignity, the chief priests—the primate and bishops of the day—their servants and the servile crowd echoing their cry, answered the governor's appeal only by loud shouts of "Crucify! Crucify!"

¹ John xix, 4-16.

"Take ye him, then, and crucify him, if it must be so," answered Pilate. "I have found him blameless of any offence against Roman law." As if he wished to say, "I will not be your mere tool!"

The first accusation had therefore failed, and was dropped. But the priests were determined to have his life, and forthwith demanded it on a new ground.

"If he has committed no crime worthy of death by Roman law," cried their spokesman, "we have a Jewish law which he has outraged, and by it he must die. He has claimed to be the Son of God—the Messiah—which he is not, and for that, by our Law, which thou hast sworn to uphold, he has been sentenced to death—by stoning, in any case; by the cross, if thou allowest it."

Thousands were eager to put Jesus to death, with Pilate's permission or without, now that the high-priests had roused their fanaticism,¹ and Pilate dreaded its bursting all bounds. He would, therefore, have yielded without hesitation, but there was an ominous sound in the name "Son of God." He might be braving the wrath of the gods, and what, compared to that, was the utmost these wretched Jews could do?

With no force of character, and too unprincipled to be an upright judge,—he was alarmed. Perhaps, if he brought Jesus before him, privately, once more, a way out of the difficulty would present itself. There was also that dream of Procla to frighten him.

Retiring, therefore, into the palace, he ordered Jesus to be set before him again.

"What was that they said," asked he, "about thy being the Son of God? Whence comest thou? Art thou of human birth or more?"

The dignity of spotless innocence, outraged by Pilate's conduct, forbade a reply. Anything he might have said, however clear, would have been fruitless. Jesus therefore remained silent. Pilate had abundant means

¹ John xix. 15.

of judging from the past, and, besides, it was no question of birth or origin, but a simple matter of uprightness he was called on to decide. If his prisoner were innocent, he had a right to be set free, whoever he might be.

Pilate's pride was touched by the silence. His momentary tenderness turned into lowering passion; for power, when it feels itself guilty, is the more ready to drown conscience by violence towards the weakness it wrongs. "Do you refuse to answer ME?" he asked, in flashing anger. "Do you not know that your life is in my hands, and hangs on my nod? That I can crucify, or release thee, at my pleasure?"

Christ was now silent no longer. "You have indeed," said he, "power over me, but you would have none were it not given you from God above. But your sin, though great, in condemning me against your conscience, is not so great as that of others. The chief guilt lies on him who delivered me to you."

The words and the whole conduct of Jesus, struck the heart of the Roman. Presence of mind and dignity, even in the most helpless victim of injustice, have power over the oppressor. Pilate was more than ever resolved to release him. Returning once again to the tribunal, Jesus at his side, he strove to bring the priests and the crowd to content themselves with what their victim had already suffered.

But the priests and Rabbis had hit upon a new terror for the unrighteous judge. Hardly waiting to hear his first words, they raised a cry, which they and the mob kept shouting till Pilate was thoroughly alarmed and unnerved. "If you let this man go, you are not true to Cæsar. Any one that makes himself a king, as he has done, declares against Cæsar."

Pilate knew the jealous, suspicious character of Tiberius, and an appeal to Rome might well be fatal to him. Should he expose himself to the displeasure of the emperor? He was ready for any unrighteousness, rather than brave such a danger. Perhaps, he tried to believe that he could not, in any case, save Christ's

life,¹ and flattered himself that he had acted honourably. He must, after all, look to himself first. Would he bring down on himself a recall, perhaps banishment or even worse, to save a Jew, because justice demanded his doing so? "Who, in my position," doubtless thought he, "would dream of committing such a folly? Shall I sacrifice myself for any one? No!"

Furious at the priesthood and the rabble, who kept shouting that clemency would be treason to Cæsar, Pilate once more took his official seat. It was now about nine o'clock, and he had at last given way. He would not, however, surrender without another effort to carry his point, for he was alarmed alike at Jesus and about the emperor.

Turning to Christ, still wearing the crown of thorns and the scarlet cloak, he cried, in a burst of unrestrained contempt, "Behold your King!" The only answer was a hurricane of cries, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him!" "What!" cried Pilate, with withering mockery, "shall I crucify your King?"

The chief priests were, however, more than a match for him. They had a compromising answer ready—"We have no king but Cæsar!" "The hypocrites," doubtless thought Pilate, "with the souls of slaves. The mortal enemies of the emperor, priests too, pretending to be the heads of religion, pretend to pay Cæsar homage, only to compel me to carry out their revenge against one better than themselves."

It was Friday, and Sabbath—on which nothing could be done—began at sunset. If the execution were delayed, new difficulties might rise from Jewish scruples about breaking the holy day, by the exposure of bodies on the cross during its hours. Who, moreover, could tell what might happen if the followers of Jesus rose to release their Teacher? Besides, Pilate felt he could not now save him, and wished the whole matter over as soon and as quietly as possible.

He therefore at last gave the final order for crucifixion.

¹ John xix. 8.

CHAPTER XXXV

CALVARY

AMONG the spectators of the trial and condemnation was Judas Iscariot.¹ Whatever might have been his thoughts before, he no sooner saw Jesus led away from Gethsemane by the Roman soldiers than all changed. The whirlwind of evil in his soul was spent, and in its place had come remorse. The great moon, the silent night, his loneliness after such agitation, the sudden breaking up of the past, the vision of the three years now so tragically ended; echoes and remembrances of the love and Divine goodness of the Master he had betrayed; the thought of the future judgment, his self-condemnation as a traitor—acted and reacted upon his heart and brain.

It may be he had stood, through all the incidents of the trial, hoping against hope that his Master would at last put forth his power, and deliver himself, for it is quite possible that he acted as he had done, to compel Jesus, even against his will, to exert his miraculous power to deliver himself, and thus, after all, bring within the reach even of his betrayer, the position and wealth for which he had longed.

To his horror, he found all his plans miscarry. His guilt broke in a fire-rain on his soul, and he felt himself, already, accursed.

Hurrying to the Temple with the money, for which he had sold himself to Satan, he pressed the authorities to take it back, and deliver Jesus. But though willing

¹ Matt. xxvii. 3.

to use him for their own ends, they would not touch the coin, which had been the price of blood. They could see the red stain on the shekels, but not on their own souls. Judas was nothing to them now. In his agony he pleaded with the chief priests and elders to save his Master. "I have sinned," cried he, "in that I betrayed innocent blood!"¹

But he might as well have spoken to the marble pavement on which they stood. "What is that to us?" said they. "That is your own affair. See you to it." But if he could not move them, he could at least throw back among them the money with which they had hired him. Hurling it down on the pavement, therefore, he went out, perhaps in the darkness of early morning—not waiting for the scene on Calvary—and hanged himself in a spot of ground, till then known as the clay-yard of a potter of the town, and thenceforth as the Field of Blood. Nor was even this the end; for the cord by which he had suspended himself gave way, and he fell beneath, ruptured and revolting.

To put into the treasury money "defiled" from any cause, was unlawful. To what could the authorities apply the hire of Judas? How, better, than to buy the worn-out clay pit, already unclean by this suicide, for the further pollution of a graveyard? There was need of a spot in which to bury foreign Jews who might die in Jerusalem. So the scene of the traitor's death became doubly a "field of blood."

Meanwhile, preparations were being rapidly made for crucifixion.²

Death by the cross was the most dreaded and shameful punishment of antiquity. It was of Eastern origin, and had been in use among the Persians and Carthaginians long before its employment in Western countries. Alexander the Great adopted it in Palestine, from the Phœnicians, after the defence of Tyre, which

¹ Matt. xxvii. 3-10; Acts i. 18, 19.

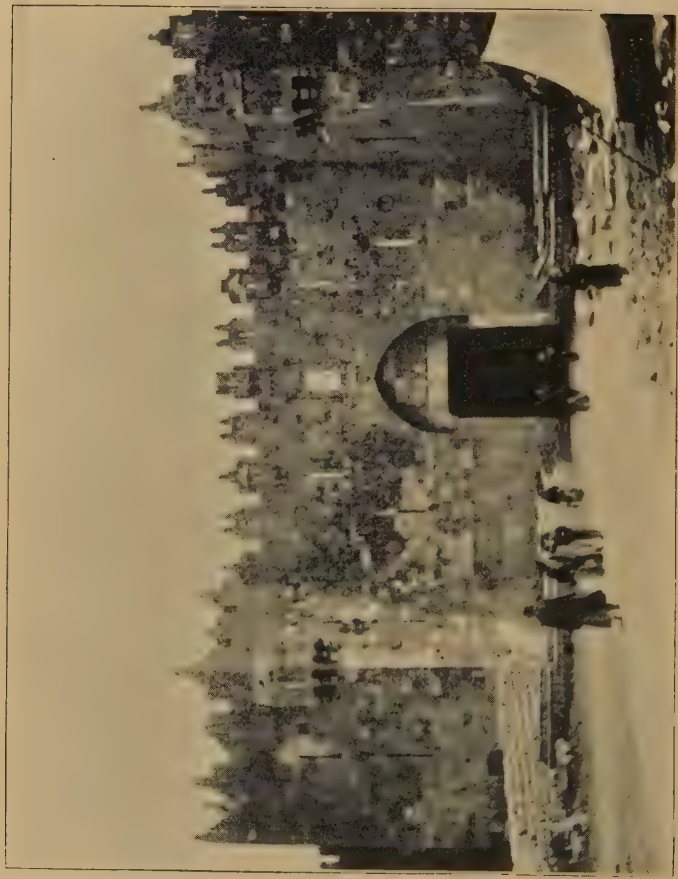
² Matt. xxvii. 31-38; Mark xv. 20-28; Luke xxiii. 26-38; John xix. 16-22.

he punished by crucifying two thousand citizens, when the place surrendered. Crassus signalized its introduction into Roman use by lining the road from Capua to Rome with crucified slaves, and Augustus finally led to its general use, by crucifying six thousand slaves at once, in Sicily.

Thus it was not of Jewish origin, for the cases mentioned in the Old Testament of "hanging up" criminals or offenders, refer only to their dead bodies, or were imitations of the heathen custom, by some of the kings. For Jews to crucify a Jew would, indeed, have been impossible, as the people would not have allowed it. The cruelty of heathenism had to be invoked before such a death could be inflicted on any Israelite. It was the Roman punishment on the worst criminals, on highway robbers, rebels, and slaves, or on provincials, who in the eyes of Romans were barbarians.

The cross used at Calvary consisted of a strong post, usually carried beforehand to the place of execution, and of two cross-pieces, borne to the spot by the victim, and afterwards nailed to this upright so that they slanted forward, letting the sufferer lean on his stretched out hands. A stout rough wooden pin, in the middle of the central post, supplied a seat of fitting agony, for the weight of the body would otherwise have torn it from the nails.

While everything was being prepared, Jesus was again exposed in the guard-room to the insults of the soldiery. At last, however, all was ready. The scarlet cloak was now removed, his own linen tunic being replaced by legionaries detailed to escort him, and by these he was led out, and the heavy transverse pieces of the cross laid on his shoulders, faint and sinking as he was, with mortal and bodily distress. A detachment of the troops still detained in the court of the palace, in case of disturbance, was also marched out under a centurion, to guard the procession to the place of death; the officer being answerable for the due execution of the sentence. Jesus was not, however, to die



DAMASCUS GATE, JERUSALEM

The Gate Gennath

alone. Two more prisoners were to suffer with him; men convicted not of mere insurrection, but of robbery—the special trouble of the land in these evil times. Pilate could hardly have intended to degrade him in the eyes of the Jews by this association with enemies of society; but the thoughtlessness which permitted such a group of victims, simply to empty the prison, and get through the annual Easter executions at once, shows how slight an impression had been made on him by all that had passed. His seriousness had been written in water.

And now the sad procession began. It was about ten in the forenoon, for at least an hour had been spent in getting ready. The soldiers stepped into their ranks, and the prisoners were set, under guard, in their places, each carrying, hung from his neck, a whitened board, stating in large black letters the offence for which he was about to die; unless, indeed, as in some cases, a soldier bore it before them. Each, also, carried the cross-beams of his cross, to be fastened together like the letter V, with his arms bound to the projecting ends.

It is vain to attempt to follow the route, for the whole surface of Jerusalem has changed since then. Roman London lies at a depth of sixteen or seventeen feet, though the history of our island has been comparatively peaceful; but Jerusalem has stood siege after siege till the streets of Christ's day are buried far more deeply. All we know is that the place of execution was outside the walls, at the side of a leading road,¹ to let the spectacle be seen by the crowds passing and repassing. As the sad procession moved slowly on, an official proclaimed aloud the names of the prisoners, and the offences for which they were about to die, and four soldiers walked beside each, as special guard and executioners, the rest of the detachment preceding and following.

As they moved through the narrow streets, a great crowd looked on. The Temple had special services

¹ Num. xv. 35; 1 Kings xxi. 13; Acts vii. 58; Matt. xxvii. 32; Mark xv. 29.

in the Passover week, and, besides, it would soon be Sabbath, and the Passover was to be eaten that night, yet many, both friends and enemies, pressed after the soldiers. The women especially, most easily touched with sorrow and pity, thronged to see One of whom they had heard so much, led out to die. In the East, men and women, even husband and wife, never appear in public together, and hence all were free to show their feelings. The Galileans in the city, taken by surprise, had had no time to show sympathy with their countryman, whom so many of them reckoned a prophet. Only Jerusalem Jews had gathered to yell down Pilate's proposals of release.

Two incidents are recorded of the journey to the place of execution. The beams laid on Jesus soon proved too heavy for his exhausted strength, and his slow advance with them so delayed the procession that the guard grew impatient, and having seized a passer-by coming from the country, compelled him to bear them. The involuntary cross-bearer was a foreign Jew, called Simon,¹ from Cyrene, in North Africa—now part of Tunis, but then in the province of Libya. An Egyptian king² had carried off a hundred thousand Jews from Palestine, and settled them in those regions, where, in three hundred years, they had increased so greatly in numbers, that a special synagogue was erected in Jerusalem³ for the pilgrims they sent to the great feasts. Simon's appearance marked him as a foreigner, for, in the East, all nationalities have their distinctive dress, and, as a stranger, the infamy of being made to carry a cross would be less likely to cause a stir. It may be that he showed sympathy with Jesus; but, in any case, his service to him appears to have led to his becoming a Christian, with all his family; for it is easy to believe the tradition that the "Rufus and his mother," of whom St. Paul, a quarter of a century later, speaks so tenderly, were his wife and one of his two

¹ Matt. xxvii. 32.

² Ptolemy Soter, B. C. 323–285.

³ Acts vi. 9.

sons, Alexander and Rufus, favourably mentioned by St. Mark.¹

From the moment of his declaring himself the Messiah, and being condemned to die for doing so, Jesus had had nothing more to say to his judges. No cry of pain, no murmur of impatience escaped him. He bore indignities and agonies with unbroken submission.

But his lips, shut for hours, opened once more on his way to death. Many of the spectators did not attempt to conceal their sympathy; and among the great crowd women filled the air with loud lamentations and wailings. Touched with their grief, so strangely sweet after such mockery and hatred, Jesus stopped, and turning to them, bade them lament, not for him, but for themselves.

"Daughters of Jerusalem," said he, "weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming in which they shall say, 'Blessed is she that never had a child,' and they will call to the mountains to fall on them and to the hills to cover them. For if they do what they are now doing in the green tree, while still free from trouble, what crimes will they do in the dry tree, when your nation is perishing?"²

The spot on which the crosses were to be erected was known by the name Golgotha, of which Cranion, "a skull," given as the name by St. Luke, writing for Gentiles, is the Greek translation, and Calvaria, Calvary, the Latin. From a fancied allusion to the shape of a skull, tradition has spoken of it as a hill; but the Gospels ascribe its name simply to its shape, without any reference to its height. A spot just outside the Damascus gate has been thought, in late years, to be the place thus sadly honoured, for its shape is not unlike a skull, and the Jews still give it the name of

¹ Mark xv. 21 ; Rom. xvi. 13.

² Luke xxiii. 27-32 ; Matt. xxvii. 31-34 ; Mark xv. 20-23 ; John xix. 16, 17.

the "place of execution," or "the place of skulls." A Mohammedan burial-ground covers part of it, and there is a cave at the side next the city, known as the grotto of Jeremiah. It is quite bare and unenclosed, and only twenty or thirty feet at its highest point above the road to Damascus, which passes close beneath it. But it is very uncertain if this be the place. It may prove to have been on the site of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

The cross-pieces were nailed in their places on the upright posts, sometimes before, sometimes after the posts themselves had been set up. Jesus and his fellow-sufferers, in either case, were now stripped, as they had been before they were scourged—a linen cloth at most being left round their loins. The centre cross was set apart for Our Lord, and he was either laid on it as it lay on the ground, or lifted and tied to it as it stood upright; his arms stretched along the two cross-beams, and his body resting on the projecting pin of rough wood. The most dreadful part then followed; for, though even the Egyptians only tied the victims to the cross, the Romans and Carthaginians added to the torture by driving a huge nail through the palm of each hand, into the wood. The legs were next bent up till the soles of the feet lay flat on the upright beam, and then they, too, were fastened, either separately, by two great iron nails, or over each other, by one.

During these preparations, it was common to offer the sufferer some of the common sour wine drunk by the soldiers, mingled with some stupefying bitter drug, usually myrrh. The ladies of Jerusalem made it, indeed, their special task to provide this for all condemned persons. But Jesus would take nothing to cloud his faculties, even though it might mitigate his pain.¹ The cross was now raised and let down into a hole dug for it,² with a rough shock of indescribable

¹ Matt. xxvii. 34.

² Assuming that our Lord was nailed to it while it lay on the ground.

agony. It was perhaps then that the first words uttered on it rose from his lips: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,"¹—words breathing love, not only towards the soldiers, who were the blind servants of power, but even to Pilate and Caiaphas, Hannas and Jerusalem!

Racked by the extremest pain, and covered with every indignity; forsaken and denied by his disciples; no sigh escaped his lips, no cry of agony, no bitter or faltering word; only a prayer for the forgiveness of his enemies.

The "title" that had been borne before him, or hung from his neck, was now nailed on the projecting top of the cross, over his head. That all classes might be able to read it, Pilate had it written in the three languages of the country—the Aramaic of the people, the Latin of the Romans, and the Greek of the foreign population. It proclaimed him THE KING OF THE JEWS, but seems to have run differently in each language, to judge from the variations in the Gospels. No tribute could have been more fitting or more prophetic than an inscription which spoke unconsciously of the relation of the Cross to all the world.

The crucifixion was now completed, and there only remained the weary interval till death released the sufferers from their agonies. Meanwhile the troops, with their centurion, kept the ground and guarded the three crosses, for they were answerable with their lives for the due carrying out of the execution.

The four soldiers specially detailed to carry out the sentence of the governor, were now free to appropriate, as their perquisites, the clothes of the three victims.² The outer garments of Jesus they divided into four shares—tearing the larger, to make the division equal, for they were not worth keeping entire. The inner robe, however, like the robes of the priests, was of one piece, woven from the top without any seam or

¹ Luke xxiii. 34.

² John xix. 23.

stitching, and would be destroyed by rending. The dice were ready in their pockets, and one of their brazen helmets would serve to throw them; it would be better to cast lots for this, and let him who won the highest number keep it for himself—and so it was done. No wonder that both Matthew and John, looking back on the scene, were struck by the fact that it had been written ages before, in the twenty-second Psalm, which the Jews of that day, as well as Christians, referred to the Messiah: "They parted my garments among them, and for my vesture they cast lots."¹

The inscription on the cross had been Pilate's revenge for the condemnation of Jesus wrung from him by the priests. To proclaim him, the villager of Nazareth, as the King of the Jews, marked at once what, in his opinion, was fitting for them, and flung in their faces a bitter reproach of having betrayed their own nation and countryman to Rome. The authorities of the Temple, indignant and yet alarmed, applied to him to alter it. But he had suffered enough at their hands, and smarting under his defeat and humiliation, dismissed them with the curt answer, "What I have written I have written."

Meanwhile the fierce heat of a Syrian noon beat down on the cross. The suffering in crucifixion, from which death at last resulted, rose partly from the fixed position of the body and of the outstretched arms, which caused acute pain from every twitch or motion of the back, lacerated by the knout, and of the hands and feet, pierced by the nails. These latter were, moreover, driven through parts where many sensitive nerves and sinews come together, mutilating some and violently crushing down others. Inflammation of the wounds in both hands and feet speedily set in, and ere long rose also in other places, where the circulation was checked. Intolerable thirst and ever-increasing pain followed.

¹ Ps. xxii. 18.

The blood, which could no longer reach the extremities, rose to the head, swelled the veins and arteries in it unnaturally, and caused the most agonizing tortures in the brain. As, besides, it could no longer move freely from the lungs, the heart grew more and more oppressed, and all the veins were distended. Had the wounds bled freely, it would have been a great relief; but there was very little bleeding. The weight of the body itself, resting on the wooden pin of the upright beam; the burning heat of the sun scorching the veins, and the hot wind drying up the moisture of the body, made each moment more terrible than the preceding. The numbness and stiffness of the more distant muscles in the end brought on painful convulsions, and this, slowly extending, sometimes through two or three days, at last reached the vital parts, and released the sufferer by death.

Common pity would have left the victim of such agony to die in peace. But there was no compassion for the Redeemer. The title over his head was as offensive to the people as to the priests and Rabbis, for it was a virtual ridicule of their dream of universal monarchy. Beneath the cross rose the same cruel mockery as the governor had thought not beneath the dignity of Rome. The fierce crowd had heard repeatedly that day of Jesus having said, as was asserted, that he could destroy their Temple, and rebuild it in three days. They had heard also a great deal about his miracles, and of his calling himself the Son of God; but if he were so, why would he allow himself to die such a death? There were taunts and gibes from the mob and the soldiers, and sneers at his fate as no worse than he deserved; even the chief priests, Rabbis, and elders, among their own haughty knots and groups,¹ degrading themselves to the level of the rabble in their coarseness. "Thou that destroyest the Temple, and buildest it in three days, show that thou couldst have done so, by saving thyself, and coming down from the

¹ Matt. xxvii. 39-44; Mark xv. 29-32; Luke xxiii. 35-37, 39-43; John xix. 25-30.

cross," called out a looker-on, with a contemptuous laugh. "If thou be the Son of God, as thou sayest," cried another, "come down from the cross." "He wrought miracles to save others," said a high-priest to his fellow, "by the help of Beelzebub, but he cannot save himself now his master has forsaken him." The crowd, catching their spirit, bandied from one to another the scoff, "If he be the Christ, the King of Israel, the Chosen of God, let him descend from the cross, that we may see and believe."

Nor was the only railing and mockery from the spectators. Perhaps wishing to win a poor favour with the crowd in their last hours, the two unhappy men crucified with him cast the same reproaches in his teeth. But a strange contrast was soon to display itself. One of the two, ere long, awed and won by his bearing under such treatment—perhaps thinking of the words of Jesus to the women on the way to Calvary; perhaps struck by the title over the Saviour's head, or recollecting some words of his, heard in happier days—repented of his bitterness, and turned to his companion, to persuade him also to kinder thoughts. "Do you not even fear God," said he, "when you think that you are dying the same death?" Besides, we are dying justly, for we are receiving the fitting punishment of our deeds; but this man has done nothing amiss."

Then followed words which showed that his repentance and faith were sincere and intelligent. He had evidently heard of Jesus before, and of his claims to be the Messiah, and even of his Messianic Kingdom being yet future, as Our Lord had made known to his apostles only in the closing weeks of his life; having, perhaps, learned about it from them or heard Christ's words himself. Turning his head therefore to him, he meekly said, "Jesus, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom."

"To-day," replied Jesus, "thou shalt be with me in Paradise."¹

¹ Luke xxiii. 43.

The Eleven had not gathered again after the arrest, having been too much alarmed even to venture near the cross. John, alone, showed courage enough to follow his Master to Calvary. The last sight we have of him, before the crucifixion, is in the courtyard of the high-priest, where his silence and prudence saved him from the danger before which Peter had fallen. He had seen Jesus led away to Pilate, and, apparently, had waited in the crowd, to the end. Mary had come to Jerusalem to be near her son, but we do not know when; for she was not one of the group of pious Galilean women who habitually followed him, and she, with some of these, stood by him in these awful hours. Of these faithful ones the names have been handed down. They were Mary's sister, who, it may be, was Salome, the mother of John;¹ Mary, the wife of Clōpas; and Mary from Magdala, on the banks of Gennesareth.

A supernatural darkness had fallen on the landscape soon after the nailing to the cross, though it was then high noon: but the spectators probably fancied it only a strange incident in the weather. The sufferer had offered his prayer for his murderers, and had spoken words of comfort to the penitent spirit at his side, when, as his eyes wandered over the crowd, he saw, through the gloom, John, standing by his mother. None of his "brothers or sisters" were there, for it was his resurrection apparently that first won them. Mary, long a widow, was now to be doubly bereaved. John's presence there proclaimed his heart. The sight of his mother in tears must have brought back tender remembrances of Nazareth; of the sorrows that so often, in these last years, had pierced her soul, and of the supreme grief that now overwhelmed her; and was a delightful proof of her true faith in him, shining out in these last hours.

Turning his face, now veiled with many sorrows, to her and John, he provided for the one, and honoured

¹ Comp. John xix. 25 with Mark xv. 40.

the fidelity of the other. A few words gave Mary another son, and rewarded the friend of his soul by a charge to take the place towards Mary which he himself was leaving. "Woman," said he, in tones of infinite tenderness, "behold thy son." Then, looking at John, he added, "Behold thy mother."¹

Need we wonder that the beloved disciple, writing his Gospel in old age, felt a sweet reward in recalling an incident so unspeakably touching? Mary, henceforth, had a home, for John took her to his own. His love to her Divine Son made him dearer to her than the circle of Nazareth, however related. In Mary, he saw a second mother.

It was now three o'clock, and Jesus had hung on the cross about three hours. Darkness still lay like a pall over the landscape, as if nature, less insensible than man, refused to look on such a spectacle. What had been passing in his spirit no one can know. The cross was but the last scene in a long martyrdom. His soul had often been sore troubled; his sighs had been marked even by his disciples. To be dying for the sake of men, and yet to be treated as their foe; to be misconceived and misrepresented; to have his heart full of infinite love, and hear, even now, only execrations, brought back for a moment the mental agony of Gethsemane. It was the "power of darkness;" the final struggle with the Prince of this World. His Father was with him in the midst of the darkness as much as in the Transfiguration at Cæsarea Philippi, but the gathering clouds and gloom of these last hours made it seem as if His face were hidden. The shadows of death passed for a moment over his spirit, and his mental anguish relieved itself by a great cry of distress. The language we have heard from our mother's lips and have spoken in childhood may be afterwards laid aside, and Jesus, doubtless, in these last years, had often used Greek, instead of his own simple Galilean. But,

¹ John xix, 26, 27.

now, the sounds of infancy, always nearest the heart, and sure to come to the lips in our deepest emotion, returned in his anguish, and in words which he had learned at his mother's knee, his heart uttered its last wail—

“Eloï! Eloï! lama sabachthani?”

“My God! My God! why hast Thou forsaken me?”¹

The first words sounded like the name of the great prophet Elijah, the expected herald of the Messiah, and were taken by some in the crowd, for a cry that he should come to save him. Meanwhile, one near, more pitiful than the rest, heard the words “I thirst,” and seeing the agony of which they were the expression, ran and filled a sponge with the sour wine-and-water of the soldiers, and having fixed it on the short stem of a hyssop-plant growing near, put it to his lips; for the cross was quite low, the feet of Jesus reaching nearly to the ground.

A moment more, and all was over. The cloud had passed as suddenly as it rose. Far and wide, over the vanquished throngs of his enemies, with a loud voice, as if uttering his shout of eternal victory before entering into his glory, he cried,

“IT IS FINISHED!”²

Then, more gently, came the words:—

“Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.”³

A moment more, and there rose a great cry, as of mortal agony; the head fell. He was dead.

The work of salvation was now at last completed. The Jewish religion was for ever abrogated, and the Holy of Holies had ceased to be the peculiar presence chamber of Jehovah among men. Nor was a sign wanting that it was so; for the great veil of purple and gold—sixty feet long and thirty broad—before the

¹ Matt. xxvi. 46; Mark xv. 34.

² John xix. 30.

³ Luke xxiii. 46.

inner sanctuary of the Temple, suddenly rent itself in two, from the top to the bottom, at the moment of Christ's death; as if He who had hitherto dwelt there had gone forth to lead up His Eternal Son to His own right hand. And, indeed, not only the yielding veil of the Temple, but the very rocks round Calvary, as St. Matthew tells us,¹ "were rent, and the earth quaked, the graves were opened, and many of the saints sleeping in them rose from the dead, and went into the Holy City, and appeared unto many."

One incident is recorded of this moment by three of the Evangelists. The centurion in charge of the troops was beside the cross, when Jesus uttered his loud death-cry, and must have fixed his gaze on him at such a sound. He saw the change pass over his features, and the head suddenly sink. As it did so the earthquake shook the ground and made the three crosses tremble. But the tremor of the earth affected the Roman less than the piercing cry and sudden death.² He had likely attended many crucifixions, but had never known of a man dying on a cross within three hours. He had never heard a crucified man, strong to the last, utter a shriek that showed, as that of Jesus did, the full power of the vital organs to the end. He felt that there was something mysterious in it, and joining with it all he had seen and heard, he broke involuntarily into the words, "Certainly this was a righteous man; truly this was the Son of God." The one expression, perhaps, on his lips, meant no more than the other, but both showed that even thoughtful heathen were deeply moved by the spectacle they had witnessed.

Nor was the effect on the spectators less marked. The darkness, the earthquake, and the rending rocks had filled them with alarm. They had hitherto been noisy and ribald enough, but when all was over, amidst such strange portents of nature, they were glad to hasten home in silence, with the demonstrations of awe

¹ Matt. xxvii. 51-54; Mark xv. 38, 39; Luke xxiii. 45, 47-49.

² Matt. xxvii. 54; Mark xv. 39; Luke xxiii. 47 (R.V.).

peculiar to Eastern populations—smiting their breasts as they went.

The Jewish law, as I have said, knew nothing of crucifixion, but it had been not uncommon to hang up the dead body of a criminal. It was not permitted, however, that it should be exposed after sunset; burial the same day was enacted, "that the land should not be defiled."¹ The Romans, on the contrary, left the bodies on the cross till they were wasted away, or devoured by the dogs, the jackals, or the ravens, as they fell limb from limb. "To feed the crows on the cross" was a familiar expression. It was necessary, therefore, if the Jewish law were to be honoured, that the permission of Pilate should be given for putting the crucified ones to death, if they had not already died, and for taking down and burying their bodies, almost at once. Next day was the great Paschal Sabbath, and only an hour or two remained before the Passover itself commenced. Three corpses seen on the cross, so near the Temple and the Holy City, on a day so sacred, would make a great commotion.

The Temple authorities, therefore, waited on Pilate, to get his sanction for putting to death any of the three who might yet be alive. The common way to do so was in keeping with Roman brutality. The legs of the unfortunates were broken by blows of clubs, that the shock might kill them at once, and this Pilate authorized to be done. The two thieves were found still living, and the horrible order was forthwith executed on them; but Jesus was dead already, and they left him untouched. One soldier, however—resolved that there should be no doubt—plunged his spear into the Saviour's side, making a gash so wide, that Jesus could afterwards ask Thomas to put his hand into it, and so deep, that blood and water poured out in such a quantity as attracted the notice of John, who was standing by.²

¹ Deut. xxi. 23.

² John xix. 31-42.

That any one should die so soon on the cross appeared to the early Christians supernatural. But the mingled flow of blood and water points unmistakably to the true explanation. The immediate cause of death appears, beyond question, to have been the rupture of the heart, brought about by mental agony. Excess of joy or grief is known to induce this, and a consequent flow of blood into the bag, filled with colourless liquor like water, in which the heart is suspended. In ordinary cases, only examination after death discovers the fact, but in that of Our Lord, it was disclosed by the thrust of the soldier's spear. In a death from heart-rupture the hand is suddenly carried to the front of the chest, and a piercing shriek uttered. The hands of Jesus were nailed to the cross, but the appalling shriek is recorded.

Jesus died, literally, of a broken heart!

The heat of the climate in the East has led to the custom of burial almost immediately after death, but there were special reasons for that of Jesus being hurried. It was, as I have said, Sabbath eve, and no corpse could be left unburied to defile the Holy City, on that day. Our Lord, therefore, must be buried without a moment's delay, for sunset, when the Sabbath began, was rapidly approaching.

Bodies of Jewish criminals seem to have been thrown into the unclean dust-heaps in the Valley of Hinnom. But such an indignity was not to befall the sacred form of the Saviour.

Among the spectators of the crucifixion there had been one, if not two, whose position might have enabled them to be of service to Jesus before the high priestly court, had they possessed the moral courage required. Joseph, a member of the ruling class, from Arimathea, or Ramathaim Zophim,¹ where Samuel the prophet was born, among the fruitful hills of Ephraim, had long been a secret disciple; and so,

¹ 1 Sam. i. 1, 19; Matt. xxvii. 57-66; Mark xv. 42-47; Luke xxiii. 50-56; John xix. 38-42.

also, had Nicodemus, another member of the upper classes. They had timidly kept in the background during his trial, though neither voted for his condemnation, and Joseph, if not both, had come to see him die. Now that he was dead, breaking through all weak reserve and caution, he went into the city,¹ and waited on the governor in his palace, to ask as a favour, that the body might be put at his disposal. He would fain honour the lifeless form. He had been waiting for the Kingdom of God before, but would openly recognise its Founder now.

Pilate was astonished, alike that a Jew of high social position should make such a request, and that Jesus should already be dead. It was not allowed to remove a body from the cross without formal permission from the governor. The Eleven, with one exception, had forsaken their Master in his last awful hours, and the humble women who had watched the cross did not venture to ask for his corpse. It was no light matter Joseph had undertaken: for to take part in a burial at any time would defile him for seven days, and make everything unclean which he touched;² and to do so now involved his being shut out from the Passover. But he had risen superior to all selfish considerations, and would render his Master a tribute and service especially sacred in the eyes of a Jew.

Sending for the officer who had charge of the execution, and finding that Jesus was really dead, Pilate granted Joseph's strange request. A brave deed had had its success. But the humour of the governor could not be counted on, and the rage of Joseph's own party was certain. Legend describes Joseph as beseeching the favour with tears and entreaties, and thus rightly marks the gravity of his act; but it is not unlikely that a meaner influence came to his help, for Pilate was always open to a bribe. A good sum of money would weigh more than entreaties, to secure his wish.

¹ Mark xv. 43.

² Num. xix. 16; Hagg. ii. 13.

A written order, or a verbal command to the centurion, put the body at Joseph's disposal.

With the help of servants, and it may be of some soldiers, the cross was quickly lifted from its socket and laid on the ground, the cords round the limbs untied, and the nails drawn from the hands and feet. An open bier sufficed to carry the body to its destined resting-place.

The neighbourhood of Jerusalem, like all other parts of Palestine, has, since the earliest times, abounded in tombs hewn out in the limestone rock. Every one who could by any means secure it, desired above all things to prepare for himself and his family an "everlasting house," and such a tomb, never yet used, had been hewn out in the hill-side, by Joseph, in a garden not far from Calvary.

To this the body of Jesus was now taken. Nicodemus had come, with some of his servants, and he and they, with Joseph and his attendants, Mary of Magdala, Mary the mother of James the Younger and of Joses, the wife of Clōpas, and perhaps some others of the true-hearted women from Galilee, were the only followers of his bier.

Arrived at the grave, the sacred burden was laid down, till the needed preparations were made for placing it in the tomb. The whole body, stained as it was with blood, was tenderly washed, and then wrapped in long, broad bands of white linen, thickly strewn within with powdered myrrh and aloes, which had been provided by Nicodemus for the imperfect embalming practised by the Jews. The ends of the bandages were apparently secured on the inner side with gum, as in the case of the Egyptian dead. After a last kiss, the pledge of undying love, a white cloth was finally laid over the face. The corpse was then placed in a niche in the rock, and a great stone which served as a door, was rolled before the entrance, to protect the body from the designs of enemies or the attacks of wild beasts. It was only a hurried burial, for the last

rays of the sun were shining on the garden as the tomb was closed.

Even then, however, there were some hearts that could not leave the spot. Though he no longer spoke to them and they no longer saw him, some of the Galilean women lingering beside his resting-place, sat down on the earth, before it, as mourners. In the evening stillness and gathering twilight they seemed even yet to hear his voice and see his form, and so they lingered on, as near as might be into the Sabbath eve, lamenting him whom they had lost.

Meanwhile, a meeting of the chief priests and their party had been held immediately after the crucifixion, and the success of the scheme to crush Jesus had, doubtless, been the subject of hearty rejoicing. But they feared all was not over. It was remembered by one or more, that "the deceiver" had spoken darkly of rising from the dead on the third day, and his disciples, acting on this hint, might steal the body, and say that he had risen, misleading the people more than ever. It was hence necessary that the grave should be watched for three days. A deputation was therefore appointed to wait on Pilate, representing their apprehensions. Tired of them, and hating them, the governor was in no humour to argue. "You have a guard," said he with military bluntness. "Go, make it as sure as ye can." This they did. Passing a strong cord across the stone, they put clay seals on the two ends, after noting that the soldiers were duly stationed so as to make approach without their knowledge impossible.

When in Jerusalem again, lately, I examined a tomb near the reputed Calvary, thought by some to have been that in which the Redeemer lay. But it seemed to me quite impossible, among so many in the neighbourhood, to form any reliable opinion on the subject. Jacob's Well remains the only spot which we can safely identify with the earthly presence of Our Lord.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE RESURRECTION

MARY of Magdala, and the wife of Clōpas, herself another Mary—for Mary, from the Hebrew Miriam, had been a favourite name among Hebrew women ever since the days of the sister of Moses—had sat on the ground at the door of the garden-tomb in which the Beloved One lay, till late on the evening of Friday. The trumpet announcing the beginning of the great Passover Sabbath had only startled them for a moment, and exhausted nature had, perhaps, first compelled them to leave.

The next day rose calm and bright on the budding and blossoming landscape, for it was the month of flowers, and nature was in the secret to be revealed on the morrow, and might well, for joy, put on her fairest. The courts of the Temple were filled from morning till evening with zealous worshippers; the bare-footed, white-robed, and turbaned priests were busy offering the blood of bulls and of goats for the sins of Israel, unconscious that that of a greater sacrifice had been poured out. Yet it must have been with strange feelings they went through the services of the day. The trumpets and voices of the Levites were loud and clear as ever; the high-priest, fresh from Golgotha, as gorgeous in his splendid robes; the crowd of priests as engrossed with official toil; the throngs filling the courts below not less numerous or devout. But an omen, portentous beyond all their history recorded, had been seen by Levite and priest alike—for was not the Holy of Holies, hitherto veiled in awful darkness, and entered only

once in the year, for a few moments, by the high-priest, laid visibly open before every one in the court of the priests, or even in the vast Temple area? For this Hallowed Spot stood high above all the courts of the sanctuary. The huge, heavy veil of Babylonian tapestry of fine flax, gorgeous in its hyacinth and scarlet and purple, had been rent from top to bottom, at the moment when the "enemy of the Temple" expired on Calvary, and the awful presence-chamber of Jehovah had been exposed to every eye, like ground no longer sacred.

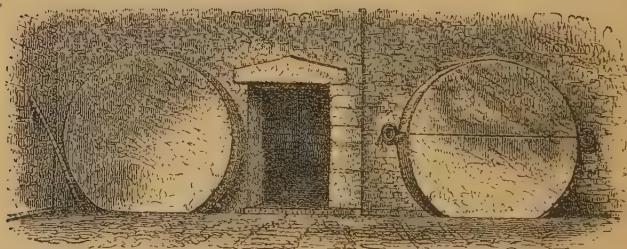
The disciples of Jesus, and even the Eleven, had been overwhelmed by the events of the day. Having no clear idea of their Master's meaning, and thinking little on words painful at best, his repeated warnings that he must be put to death, but would rise again from the dead on the third day, had made no lasting impression on their minds. The end had been so sudden and complete, that, for the time, they were confounded and paralysed.

It is the glory of woman that she refuses to forsake those she loves, even when things are darkest. The two Marys had left the grave only when night compelled them, but even then they still had its dear One in their hearts. The Sabbath, which had begun just as the stone was rolled to the entrance, kept them from doing anything for him for twenty-four hours, but it was no sooner over, on Saturday at sunset, than with Salome, and Joanna, and some other women, they arranged to take additional spices at the earliest dawn,¹ to complete the embalming of the body, begun by Nicodemus, but left unfinished through the approach of the Sabbath. Mary, the mother of Jesus, was too sorely stricken in heart to join them.

Meanwhile, the Roman sentries were pacing to and fro on their beat, before the sepulchre; their fire lighted, for the spring night was chilly, and besides, the light revealed any one approaching. The true-hearted women had resolved to reach the grave by sunrise, which would

¹ Matt. xxviii. 1-10; Mark xv. 1-8; Luke xxiv. 1-11.

take place about a quarter before six in the morning, and slept outside the city gates, which did not open till daybreak at the earliest. The grey dawn had hardly shown itself, before they were afoot on their errand, to perform the last offices of love. As they went, however, a difficulty rose of which they had not thought before. Who would roll back the stone for them from the door of the sepulchre? They had heard nothing, apparently, of its having been sealed, or of the guard being mounted in the garden, else they might have been altogether discouraged. But we may be sure they had told some



ROCK TOMBS.

- (A) With the stone rolled to the door and sealed by a band across.
(B) With the stone rolled back and the seal broken.

of the Eleven where the grave lay and might hope that one, at least, would be there to help them.

A greater than an apostle had already, however, been at the tomb. For St. Matthew tells us, "an angel of the Lord had descended from heaven, his countenance shining like lightning, and his raiment white as snow, and," striking terror even into the Roman guard, "had rolled back the stone from the door." As it opened, the Crucified One had come forth, unseen by the dazzled soldiers, and had presently vanished.

They had scarcely left the spot when the women

arrived. The earth was trembling, but they had kept on their way. How great must have been their astonishment, however, when they found the stone rolled back, and the grave open. There was no longer a guard, for the soldiers had fled in terror. Mary of Magdala entered the garden first, and found things thus, and having run back to the others, hastened into the city to tell Peter and John. Determined to solve the mystery, if possible, her companions came together to the sepulchre, and, bending down, entered its inner chamber. But it was only to be appalled by the sight of an angel in white, sitting in it. Presently, a second radiant form stood before them, as they bowed down their faces to the earth in terror. But words now fell on their ears which brought back joy to their hearts. "Fear not, for I know that ye seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified. Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, for he is risen. Behold the place where they laid him. But go quickly, tell his disciples, and Peter, that he is risen from the dead. Remember the words that he said to you while he was yet in Galilee—that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And tell them 'he goeth before you into Galilee, there you will see him, as he said unto you.' Lo, I have told you."

Mary of Magdala had hurried back to Jerusalem, to Peter and John, to tell them that the grave was empty. Mary, now John's honoured guest, hearing the amazing news, joined the other Mary in urging the two apostles to go immediately to the tomb, though their own faithful hearts had already impelled them to do so. Peter and John, therefore, were instantly on the way to the garden; their eager haste hurrying them to the utmost speed. John, however, younger than Peter, outran him, yet contented himself, on reaching the tomb, with stooping down and gazing into it. The body assuredly was gone, but there was no trace of violence, for the linen bandages lay in the niche where the body had been

placed, while the head-cloth had been carefully rolled up and put by itself. The sight awed him so that he could not enter; but no such hesitation checked Peter. Passing through the low door, he went in, undismayed. Following his friend, John now entered, and saw that Christ was, indeed, gone. The great truth, as he himself tells us in long after years, now for the first time flashed on his mind, that Jesus had risen.¹ Neither he nor the other apostles had as yet realised that it had been foretold in the Scriptures² that he would do so; for this would have explained the whole at once, and would have thrown light on the hitherto mysterious words of Jesus himself respecting his resurrection.

Having seen for themselves the empty tomb, they thought of going back, to discuss with each other and with their brethren what it could mean. But the women would not leave the spot. They only cared to find him whom they loved, if they could; for they fancied that the body had been removed to some other place. Mary of Magdala had meanwhile returned, and stood weeping at the door of the tomb.³ The two apostles had seen no angels, but she was more highly favoured. Gazing into the sepulchre, the space where Jesus had lain was no longer untenanted, but, instead of the Redeemer, she saw two angels, in bright robes, one where the head and the other where the feet had rested. They were there to comfort the broken heart, as, indeed, they had, doubtless, been before, though for the time they remained unseen.

"Woman," said one, in a human voice that disarmed fear, "why weepest thou?"

"Because," replied Mary, in broken accents, "they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him."

As she said this, she drew back into the open garden, hardly knowing what she did. A man now stood before her, with the simple dress of the humbler classes, and

¹ John xx. 1-10.

² Ps. xvi. 10.

³ John xx. 11-18.

being in a garden, she naturally thought him the person in charge of it. "Woman," said he strangely enough, in the same words as the angels had used, "Why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?" "Sir," said Mary, taking it for granted that he would know the cause of her grief, "if thou hast carried him from this tomb, pray tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." She was a woman of means, and would see that he had a final and suitable resting-place.

No reply was given, except the utterance of her own name—"Mary." But the voice revealed the speaker. It was that of Jesus. She had not recognised him, but the sound of that voice, so tenderly remembered, brought with it full recognition of the face and form.

"Rabboni," said she, in the country tongue they both loved so well, "my Teacher!" and was about to fall on his neck.

"Touch me not," said he, drawing back, "for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren, and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God."

Meanwhile, the other women had come near, and hearing and seeing what had passed, kneeled in lowly worship. As they advanced, Jesus greeted them with the salutation they had often heard from his lips, "All hail!" and the words left them no question of its being their Lord. He had withheld Mary from any approach to the tender freedom of former days, but he now stood still while the lowly band, Mary among them, held him by the feet, and paid him lowliest reverence. Then, as they kneeled, came the words, grateful to their hearts, "Be not afraid! Go tell my brethren to go into Galilee, and they will see me there."

So saying, he was gone.

Losing no time, Mary of Magdala and the others hurried back to Jerusalem, and found that, in the still early morning, the news had spread to all the Eleven, that their Master was alive and had been seen both by her and by them. But it seemed too

wonderful to realize at once, and sounded like an idle tale. It sufficed, however, to rally them, for the first time since Gethsemane; for that very night they once more assembled as of old.

No detailed narrative of the successive appearances of Jesus to his disciples, after his resurrection, has been left us, each narrative giving only special cases, which had particularly impressed the mind of the writer. It is evident, indeed, that he showed himself on many occasions of which no record is preserved; for St. John expressly tells us, that besides the sign in the case of Thomas, Jesus did many others before his disciples, which are not written in the Gospel bearing the apostle's name.¹ Had we a full narrative of the interval between the Resurrection and the Ascension, it would doubtless illustrate more vividly the fulness and variety of evidence which explains the triumphant proclamation of Christ's victory over death, by the apostles. To some he made himself known, as to Mary and the women, by a single word or by brief sentences, the voice carrying instant conviction with it; to others, in a lengthened communion, as with the disciples going to Emmaus; to others again, as to Thomas, by an outward proof from the wounds on his person; and, to still others, by joining them in their simple repast, as with the disciples on the shore of the Lake of Galilee.

It would seem, from a notice by St. Paul,² that the first appearance, after that granted to the women, was vouchsafed to Peter, perhaps while still in the garden. The completeness of the apostle's repentance had secured as complete a forgiveness, and Jesus could not forget that Peter's home at Capernaum had been his, or how true-hearted he had shown himself from the days of the Baptism on the Jordan, though he had failed for a moment when off his guard. The look of reproach, mingled with love and pity, had

¹ John xx. 30; John xxi. 25.

² 1 Cor. xv. 5.

melted Peter's heart while the denials were yet on his lips, and now, the tender words of the risen Christ won his heart for ever. He had been foremost in zeal for the meek and lowly Master while still rejected and despised; but when that Master stood before him, the conqueror of death, and the glorified Son of God, that zeal rose to a passionate devotion which, henceforth, knew no abatement.

The news of the Resurrection spread fast among the disciples in Jerusalem. Still, it required time to reach all, and even when announced, could not be realized at once. Deep dejection reigned throughout the little company. In spite of all their Master's warnings, his death had come on them by surprise, and, as it seemed, had destroyed everything. The report of the empty grave, and of the vision of angels, and of their announcement that he was alive, was insufficient to break their gloom, and prolonged their perplexity without relieving it.

Mid-day had passed, and only floating rumours were as yet abroad. They began to think of finally separating, and returning to their homes; for without their Master, they had no leader. Two of them determined to go back to Emmaus,¹ a village between seven and eight miles north-west of Jerusalem, among the hills. The way to it was over heights and through valleys, more and more barren as Jerusalem was left behind, but Emmaus itself looked down into a hollow through which a rivulet spread greenness and beauty. Vines and olive-trees, planted in terraces up the slopes, and the white and red flowers of the almond-tree, now bursting into blossom in the valley, made the end of the journey a pleasant contrast to its beginning.

The two travellers were not from among the apostles, and it is not even known whether they had been in the number of the Seventy. The name of the one is told us, Cleopas, a different word from Clōpas, the name

¹ Luke xxiv. 13-35.

of the husband of one of the Marys who waited on Christ. The other has been variously fancied as Nathanael, Peter, or, even Luke himself, but this is only conjecture. They were passing on their way, their conversation turning naturally on that of which their hearts were full. Was Jesus the Messiah or not? If so, how had things ended so gloomily? His life, his words, his miracles, seemed to show that he was the Messiah; but, on the other hand, how could the Messiah have been crucified?

Meanwhile, a stranger, going their way, overtook them, and, very possibly to their disappointment, joined them. He had heard how eagerly they were disputing and reasoning, so that it seemed only natural when he asked what subject had so engrossed them. Half impatient that he should seem unacquainted with a matter so supreme to themselves, Cleopas answered, "That he could not have thought any one who had been to the feast in Jerusalem, would ask the subject of their conversation, when such great things, still in every one's mouth, had happened in these last few days."

"What things?" asked the stranger.

"What but respecting Jesus of Nazareth?" replied Cleopas. "He was a prophet of God, a mighty worker of miracles, and a great teacher. All the people must own that he was that. Do you not know about him? How our priests and Rabbis seized him, and condemned him to death, and forced Pilate to crucify him? Yet we believed, as it seemed on the best grounds, that he was the Messiah, who should have delivered Israel. But it is now the third day since all this has happened. Some of the women belonging to our company, however, have created no little perplexity amongst us. They went early in the morning to the tomb, but found it empty, and came back, saying that angels had appeared to them, who told them that he was alive again. On this, some of our number went to the sepulchre, and found the facts as the women represented, but they did not see Jesus himself."

It was clear that the spark of hope kindled by the first report had been already extinguished.

The stranger had listened attentively, and now, to their surprise, began to chide them for their doubt, and entered into the matter, with the earnestness of one who felt as interested in their Master's cause as they were themselves.

The stranger was evidently at least a learned Rabbi. But, now, as he journeyed on at their side, he quoted passage after passage, from the beginning to the end of the Scriptures, and showed them how the whole spirit and contents of the Holy Books pointed to a Messiah founding a spiritual, not a mere earthly kingdom, by love and self-sacrifice, not by force. They had never heard such discourse. He threw light on the Sacred Writings which made them a new book.

Such intercourse shortened the road and found them still eagerly listening as they approached Emmaus. Climbing the hill path together, they were presently at the house where the two were to stay. And now, the stranger bade them adieu. What they had heard from him, however, had interested them so much that they longed to hear more. They begged him, therefore, to lodge with them for the night, and this, the rather, as the day was far spent. Accepting the invitation, all three went into the house.

Who could he be? Nothing in his dress or speech gave them a clue, and they did not know his features. But a feeling of reverence kept them from asking.

Simple refreshments were presently set before them—among the rest bread and wine. The stranger, as was his due, had the place of honour at table, and it fell to him to hand what was before them, to the others. Only the three were together.

Soon after, the Unknown, taking the bread, offered the usual benediction, just as Jesus had done; broke the bread, just as Jesus had broken it; handed it to them, just as Jesus had handed it. Bearing, voice, and manner were his. And now, as they looked at him more

closely, the veil he had assumed passed away, and the very face and form were his.

It was he! Meanwhile, as they gazed in wonder and reverence, he vanished.

Left to themselves, they could only speak of what they had heard and seen—of how their hearts had glowed as he talked with them along the road, and opened to them the Scriptures. But their brethren must know that they had seen him. Hastening back to Jerusalem with quickened steps, to reach it before the shutting of the gates, they found the Eleven and a number of the disciples gathered together—the amazing rumours of the day the one engrossing theme of discussion. Peter, it seemed, had told them that Jesus had appeared to him, and now the two added their wondrous narrative. It was a thing so wonderful, however, that any one should rise from the dead, that the company still fancied the women, and Peter, and the two, under some strange delusion. They could not credit their story.

It was still Sunday, and the assembled apostles, with the others, had gathered to eat a simple evening meal together, before parting for the night.¹ The doors were fast closed, for fear of any one from the high-priest or Rabbis discovering them. Suddenly, however, a Form appeared in their midst, which they at once recognised as that of Jesus. Presently the salutation they had heard so often, sounded from his lips—the common Jewish greeting, “Peace to you!”

The sight terrified and alarmed them. They could not realize that it was really Jesus himself, but fancied it was his spirit.

“Why are you in such fear,” said he, “and why do you not, at once, without any such doubts and questionings in your minds, recognise me as him whom I really am?” His hands were, of course, exposed beneath the sleeves of his tunic, and his feet could be seen through

¹ Luke xxiv. 36-49; John xx. 19-23.

his sandal-straps. Holding up the former, and showing the marks of the great iron nails of the cross in the palms, and pressing back his tunic, and disclosing the wounds on his feet, he went on: "Look at my hands and my feet, see the wounds of the nails, and be satisfied that it is I, Jesus, myself, who speak. And, that you may know that it is not my spirit you see, but the same Master you knew of old, come near and touch me, for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see me have."

Evidence so convincing could leave no doubt, but still further proof was to be given. Knowing how easily the idea might spread that his appearances were merely those of a spirit, he asked them to let him share their meal. They had broiled fish, and having set some before him, he ate it in their sight. All doubt herewith fled; it was, indeed, their risen Lord.

"Now that you are convinced that it is really I," continued Jesus, "let me remind you that what you have seen is the fulfilment of what I said to you while I was yet with you, that everything written concerning me in the Scriptures must be fulfilled in this way.

"You see thus," added he, "how it was necessary, that instead of founding an earthly kingdom, as you expected, the Messiah should suffer as I have done, and that he should rise from the dead the third day. The purposes of God further require that the need of repentance, and the promise of the remission of sins, to be obtained through my death and resurrection, should be preached, henceforth, as the great end of all I have suffered, not for Israel only but for all mankind. These truths you are to proclaim to all nations, but you are to begin at Jerusalem, that Israel may have still another opportunity of being saved through my name."

The wondering disciples now saw that he was about to leave them once more. As he prepared to do so, however, he added:—

"Peace be with you! As my Father sent me, so I send you. Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is

baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these miraculous gifts will be granted to those who believe, for a confirmation of their faith, and that they may win others. They will cast out devils in my name; they will speak with tongues new to them; they will take up serpents without harm to themselves; if they drink any deadly thing it will not hurt them; and they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.

"To fit you for your great work I shall presently send you the Helper promised by my Father; but stay in Jerusalem till you are clothed with this power from on high."

There were only ten of the Eleven present, for Thomas was absent, but these he now gathered before him, for special consecration by the Holy Spirit, to their office as apostles. He had compared this heavenly influence and transforming power to the breathing of the wind, and now, prefacing his words by breathing on the Ten, he said:

"Receive ye the Holy Spirit: whosoever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them; whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained."¹ The government of the Church was thus committed to their charge, to admit or refuse admission to it as they felt the applicant worthy or unworthy.

Having said this, he vanished from their sight.

The appearances during the day of the Resurrection had now ended. On the part of the priests and Rabbis there had been great anxiety, for they, as well as the disciples, had early heard the rumours of his having risen. Some of the watch, after having fled in terror before the descending angel, had come into the city, and reported what had happened.² A hasty meeting of the chief men of the party had been held, and the whole matter laid before them. Their perplexity was extreme, but at last their Sadducee leaders invented

¹ John xx. 22, 23

² Matt. xxv.ii. 11-15.

a specious story. Not believing in angels, they affected to think that the soldiers had been frightened away by some clever trick of the disciples, who had thus got possession of the body of their Master. There were, indeed, difficulties in the way of publishing such a story, but it would be fatal if the rumour spread that angels had appeared. The people would naturally think it a proof that Jesus had been what he said he was, and would turn to him with more ardour than ever. The guard, by the inducement of large bribes, were therefore won over to say that they had fallen asleep, and found the body stolen when they woke. The priests were aware that it was death for a sentry to sleep at his post; but removed this difficulty by the promise that, in case the story reached the ears of Pilate, they would explain that it was only an invention, to keep the people quiet.

A whole week passed before the next manifestation recorded. On Sunday—known, henceforth, as the “first day of the week,”¹ in contrast to the Jewish Sabbath, the seventh day: and as especially the “Lord’s day”²—the Eleven, having once more assembled, as they had done daily through the week and continued to do, Jesus, honouring his resurrection day,³ once more stood in the midst of them. Thomas, known as Didymus, or The Twin, had not been present on the Sunday before, and in his grave earnest way refused to believe that Jesus had risen and appeared to the Ten, without what he himself deemed complete proof. “Except I see in his hands the prints of the nails,” said he, “and put my finger into them, and put my hand into his side, where the spear-thrust made the gash, I will not believe.”

On this first Lord’s day after the Resurrection, however, his doubts were for ever dispelled. The disciples had gathered in their common room, which held at least a hundred and twenty.⁴ The doors, as before, had been carefully closed, for fear of spies from the

¹ John xx. 19.

² Rev. i. 10.

³ John xx. 24–29.

⁴ Acts i. 15.

Temple, and the approaches were, doubtless, vigilantly watched. Suddenly, however, the words "Peace to you" were heard in the midst of the company, and looking up, Jesus stood before them. He had not been near, so far as the senses could perceive, when Thomas had uttered his doubts, but he knew them none the less. Turning to the faithful but still doubting one, whose presence there showed how eagerly he wished to believe the great news, Jesus, to his amazement, addressed him :

"Thomas, thou saidst thou wouldst not believe, unless thou couldst put thy finger into the wounds of my hands, and feet, and side. Reach hither thy finger—here are my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and put it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing."

To hear his own words thus repeated by one who had not been present when they were spoken; to see the hands, and feet, and side; to receive such condescension from One who he now felt was, indeed, his loved Master, yet no longer a mortal man but the Lord of Life, the glorified Messiah who had triumphed over death, overwhelmed him with awe. No words could express his emotion. He could only utter his one deepest thought, that he had before him his Lord and his God.

"Thomas," said Jesus, "thou hast believed at last because thou hast seen me; blessed are they who, without having seen me, yet have believed."

Hitherto, the Saviour, in all his appearances, so far as they are recorded, had designed to prove to his disciples that he was really alive again. Convinced of this, there was much to say to them of "the things pertaining to the kingdom of God,"¹ which they were to spread abroad through the earth. Before his death, he had told them that he had many things to say to them, which were, as yet, too hard for them to understand or receive. These he had now to communicate;

¹ Acts i. 3.

for what would have been incomprehensible before his sufferings and Resurrection¹ was dark no longer, when seen in the strong light of the cross and the empty grave.

He did not, however, mingle among them and live in their midst as of old. They apparently expected that now he was alive again on earth, he would once more gather them round him, and stay with them, and they even fancied that surely now at last he would set about the establishment of the earthly kingdom of Israel to which they so fondly clung.² But to have lived thus familiarly with them was no longer fitting.

He had told the women at the sepulchre, to say to his apostles that he would meet them on a particular mountain in Galilee, and he doubtless repeated this to the company when in their midst. They were all Galileans, and would return home after the feast week. Galilee had been, moreover, the special scene of his labours and of his success, and a greater number of disciples could be gathered together there than in Judea. They could not begin their great work till the power was given them which the Holy Spirit would impart. At the Feast of Pentecost, seven weeks after the Resurrection, they would receive their full heavenly consecration.

In the meantime the apostles, in the interval before their Lord required their permanent service, returned, once more, to their former callings.

Simon Peter, Thomas the Twin, Nathanael of Cana, John and James, sons of Zebedec, and two whose names are not given, apparently because they were not apostles, were, therefore, among others, once more busy with their nets and boats. They had been out on the lake all night, but had caught nothing, and were rowing dispiritedly to land in the early dawn, when they saw on the shore a stranger, whom they could not recognise in the twilight as any one they knew. It was nothing strange

¹ John xvi. 12.

² Acts i. 6.

that a person should come as they were landing, to buy their catch. The simple habits of the East, moreover, made it common to sell even single fish, which were prepared and cooked on the spot, in the open air, by the buyer. They thought nothing, therefore, of the stranger presently asking them, with kindly familiarity,¹ "Children, have ye anything to eat?" as if wishing to buy for his morning meal. "Nothing at all," cried the fishermen.

"If you cast your net once more on the right side of the boat, you will find fish," said the stranger, and they, thinking perhaps that he saw a shoal they had overlooked, were only too glad to do so. But now the net sank, overloaded, so that they could hardly draw it after them as they rowed to land.

There was no further question who the stranger could be; for what was this incident but the repetition of a well-remembered miracle of their Master, almost at the same spot? "It is the Lord," whispered John to Peter. The name was enough. They were only about a hundred yards from land, but Peter could not wait. He was standing, naked, in the boat, after having swum round with the net, to sweep the waters, as is still the custom on the Lake of Tiberias; but he instantly drew on his upper garment, and, jumping into the water, swam ashore, to be the first to see if it really were his Master. The others, meanwhile, were slowly pulling to the beach, and presently reached it. It had been bare a moment before, but now, strangely enough, they saw a fire burning, with some fish on it, and bread at hand, as if the stranger had intended them for himself.

"If you would like to eat with me," said he, "bring some of the fish you have just caught."

Peter, not daring to speak in the presence of his risen Lord, instantly ran to the boat, dripping as he stood, and dragged ashore the net, which was found to have caught a hundred and fifty-three large fish, without

¹ John xxi. 1-24.

being rent. All were convinced that it was Jesus, and were dumb with amazement; for though they wished to ask, their fear, and their very eyesight, which told them that it was no other than their Master, kept them from doing so.

They had sat down on the white, dry beach, round the fire, at his invitation, and he now, once more, as of old, took his place at the head of the little group. Taking first bread, and then the fish, he divided them, just as he had done while he was with them, and as he did so, his face and bearing were so exactly what they had been, that the fear produced by the suddenness of his appearance, and the difference in him which had struck them at first, soon abated. His every word was now doubly weighty, and hence John gives us a more than usually full narrative of what followed. The meal being finished, he turned to Peter, as if to show him by a further proof how entirely his shortcoming had been forgiven, and the completeness of his restoration. He commonly called him Peter, but now addressed him as he had done three years before, when they first met,¹ and only once since, when he made his grand confession of belief that his Master was the Messiah.² "Simon, son of Jonas," asked he, "carest thou for me more than my other disciples?" "Yes, Lord," answered Peter, "thou knowest that I love Thee." "Go and feed my little ones—my lambs," replied Jesus. The same question, in the same words, was then repeated. "Yes, Lord," answered Peter, more eagerly than before, "thou knowest that I love thee." "Then, tend my sheep," replied Jesus. "Not only nourish, but care for them, as committed to thy charge." A third time the same question was asked—"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" The threefold repetition had something in it tender and warning. It was not a reproof, yet it was fitting that the disciple who, a few days before, had thrice denied him, should be made to think as often

¹ John i. 42.

² Matt. xvi. 16.

of his weakness. Peter felt it, and almost thought that Jesus doubted his trustworthiness. "Lord," said he, "thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." "Then," replied Jesus, "feed my sheep."

"Hear now," he continued, "what awaits you. Verily, verily, I say to you, when you were young, you girded yourself and went whither you pleased, and you do so still; but in your old age you will stretch forth your hands helplessly, and another will gird you, but with chains, and lead you off where you would fain not go—to the place of judgment." Words spoken, we are told, to tell him beforehand that he would have to die for his Master. Presently the words, "Follow me," summoned him once more, as of old.

Peter, taking the command literally, as Jesus seemed now leaving them, had followed him a few paces, when, turning round, he saw John coming after him. Unwilling to separate from one endeared by long companionship as a fellow-disciple, he, therefore, ventured to ask, in hope that John, too, would be allowed to come with them—"Lord, what will this man do?" But things were not as in old days of common familiar communion. "If I should please that he live till my return, why should ye seek to know it?" replied Jesus.

St. Paul, about twenty-five years after, mentions another appearance,¹ which was no doubt the same as is related more fully by St. Matthew.² It took place in a mountain, appointed for the purpose by Jesus himself, as a spot well known to all. Here a large number of disciples, including, as we know, the Eleven, gathered at the time fixed. It was a moment of supreme solemnity, for it was the close, so far as we know, of Christ's ministry in Galilee. A mountain had been chosen, alike for privacy and because all who might come would be able to see their Master. Over five hundred were gathered when Jesus appeared in their midst; some of them dead when St. Paul wrote, but the

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 6; written A.D. 59.

² Matt. xxviii. 16, 20 (R.V.).

majority still alive. With beautiful frankness, the Evangelist tells us that some, who probably had not seen him before, still doubted a miracle so wonderful, but they were so few that he could say of the multitude, as a whole, that they worshipped Jesus as their Lord.

Before this numerous assemblage Jesus declared himself, in the loftiest sense, the Messiah. "All power," said he, "is given me in heaven and in earth. As I have before commissioned my apostles, so now I commission you all, in the fulness of the authority thus given me, to go into the whole world, and announce to all men that I live, and am exalted to be the Messiah. Go, gather disciples to me from among all nations, and baptize them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you. And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Only two or perhaps three more appearances are recorded—one to James alone, and one to all the Apostles.¹ The last known meeting² with the Eleven took place immediately before the Ascension. It was the Parting for Ever, so far as visible communion on earth was concerned—the final committing of the interests of his Kingdom to them, as his chosen heralds and representatives. They were instructed to wait in Jerusalem till the promise of the Father was fulfilled, that He would send the Holy Spirit to them, as their Helper and Advocate in place of their departed Master—a promise which Jesus himself had made known to them. "For John," said he, "truly baptized with water, but the promise which even he announced, that you would be baptized with the Holy Spirit, will be fulfilled before many days."

The Apostles, acquainted as they were with the Old Testament prophecies, which foretold that the fulness of the Holy Spirit would be poured out in the times

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 7.

² Acts i. 3-8.

of the Messiah,¹ seem to have fancied that there was an indirect promise of the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom, as they conceived it, in these words. It appears as if an interval had elapsed—apparently only a part of the same day—between the appearance at which the renewed assurance of the bestowal of the Holy Spirit was given, and that at which the question they were now to ask was put. When they had come together again, Jesus once more stood among them, and then they resolved to find out, if possible, whether they had any grounds for their fond hopes.

“Lord,” asked they, “wilt thou at this time restore the fallen kingdom of the Israelitish nation?”

Jesus would not answer such a question. There was much in their expectations which would never be realized; yet the gift of the Spirit would really be the true setting up of the Kingdom of the Messiah. Of its full establishment, which would take place at his return, he would say nothing. It lay hidden in the future, and was of no advantage to them to know. “It is not for you,” said he, “to know times or seasons of God’s Providence. The Father has set these within His own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit is come upon you, and you will go forth as witnesses for me, not only to Jerusalem and Judea, but to hated Samaria, and to the heathen throughout the whole earth.”

This last interview had taken place in Jerusalem, from which he led them out towards Bethany.² At last they halted at some point not minutely recorded, on the Mount of Olives. It was the last time they were to see him. He had prepared them, as far as possible, for his leaving them, and had fitted them to receive the gift of the Spirit, which, within a few days, would illuminate their intellects and hearts.

He wished, however, to leave them in such a way that they should not think he had simply vanished

¹ Joel ii. 28, 29; Acts ii. 16.

² Luke xxiv. 50.

from them, and wait for his present re-appearance. He would show them, as far as it could be shown, that he returned from the earth to his Father; that God took him to Himself as He had taken Elijah. They would be able to tell men, when they asked where he now was, that they had seen him leave the world, and pass through the skies to the eternal kingdoms, in his human body, to sit down at the right hand of God. The thought—HE LIVES: HE IS WITH THE FATHER! was, henceforth, to be the stay and joy of his followers in all ages.

We know not with what last parting words he let them see he was now finally to leave them. All that is told us is, that he gave them his blessing, with uplifted hands. Step by step he had raised their thoughts nearer the grandeur of his true nature and work. At first the Teacher, he had, after a time, revealed himself as the Son of God, veiled in the form of man; and now, since his crucifixion and resurrection, he had taught them to see in him the Messiah, exalted to immortal and Divine majesty, as the conqueror of death and the Lord of all.

The wonderful miracle which closed his earthly communion with his chosen ones is most fully narrated by St. Luke:—

“When he had spoken these things, while they were looking at him, he was taken up into heaven, and a cloud received him out of their sight”—that cloud which spoke of the presence of God. “And as they were gazing earnestly into the heavens, as he ascended, behold two men stood by them, in white apparel, and said to them, ‘Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing into the heavens? This same Jesus, who is even now taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way as ye have seen him go.’”¹

“Earth, thou grain of sand on the shore of the Universe of God; thou Bethlehem amongst the princely

¹ Luke xxiv. 50, 51; Acts i. 9-12; Mark xvi. 19, 20.

cities of the heavens; thou art, and remainest, the Loved One amongst ten thousand suns and worlds, the Chosen of God! Thee will he again visit, and then thou wilt prepare a throne for him, as thou gavest him a manger cradle; in his radiant glory wilt thou rejoice, as thou didst once drink his blood and his tears, and mourn his death!"¹

¹ Pressel, *Leben Jesu*, p. 558.

INDEX OF SUBJECTS

ADULTERY, punishment for, 230
 Andrew, St., 93, 131
 Apostles, choice of the Twelve,
 147; details respecting the, 148,
 149
 Archelaus, 32, 54

BARABBAS, 367, 368
 Bethany, Christ at, 229, 231, 274;
 Mary anoints his feet at, 314
 Bethesda, Pool of, 160
 Bethlehem in Mary's time, 16, 17
 Bethsaida, 94
 Betrothal among Jews, 7
 Blind man, healed, brought before
 the authorities, 234

CÆSAREA PHILIPPI, 207, 211
 Caiaphas, 331; palace of, 343,
 344
 Cana, 95; cottage at, 95, 98; mar-
 riage at, 99-102
 Capernaum 106, 107, 132; cen-
 turiion at, 166
 Children, Christ invites, to come
 to him, 260
 Church, government of the, 219
 "Come unto me," 169
 Commandments, value of the dif-
 ferent, in Jewish theology, 295
 Common people, the, 103, 104,
 202
 Crucifixion, 377, 382, 384; dark-
 ness during, 387

DANCING, 169
 Death and funeral rites, 167, 187
 Dedication festival, 237
 Domitian, members of Christ's
 family before, 53

EDOMITES, hatred of, 14
 Emmaus, appearance of Jesus at,
 403-406
 Esdraelon, Plain of, 5

FIELD work of peasants, 105
 Forgiveness, duty of, 220
 Future life, notions of Rabbis re-
 specting, 293

GALILEE and Galileans, 50
 Gennesaret, 107
 Gethsemane, 535
 Greek pilgrims at feast seek to
 meet Jesus, 303

HANNAS, 331
 Hattin, Horns of, 150
 Herod Antipas, 54, 73, 81
 Herod the Great, hatred of, 14, 25
 Herodians plot with Pharisees
 against Jesus, 290
 Herodias marries Antipas, 73
 High-priests, character of some,
 333
 Houses of peasants, 95, 104
 Huleh, lake, 137

ISCARIOT, 316, 319, 323, 376

JACOB'S WELL, 120
 James, brother of John, 94, 131
 Jericho, Christ at, 265, 269
 Jerusalem, entrance into, on Palm
 Sunday, 276
 Jesus, birth of, 18; childhood of,
 34; first visit to Jerusalem, 36,
 40; at schools of Rabbis, 45;
 lost and found, 46; influences
 on young life of, 47 ff.; descen-

dants of family of, 53; baptism of, 71; temptation of, 82-88; portraits of, cannot ever have existed, 89; fancied appearance of, 90; testimony to, by John, after Temptation, 91; first disciples of, 92; age of, when he began his public work, 102; difference of, from John, 112; cleanses Temple, 113; meets Nicodemus, 114; leaves Jerusalem and the south, 118; at Jacob's Well, 121; again at Cana, 128; heals nobleman's son, 129; miraculous draught, 130; makes Peter's house his future home, 132; devil cast out in synagogue at Capernaum, 133; crowds healed by, at Capernaum, 135; Peter's mother-in-law healed by, 135; missionary circuits of, 136; cures leper, 138; spies track, 139; heals paralytic at Capernaum, 141; crisis of life of, 142; explains the contrast between himself and John, 146; Sermon on Mount, 150-159; heals man at Pool of Bethesda, 161; crime of breaking Sabbath alleged against, for this, 162; also, for letting disciples rub out wheat on Sabbath, to eat it, 163; popularity of, 165; hated by Jewish authorities, 165; heals centurion's slave, 166; raises young man at Nain, 167; woman anoints feet of, in house of Simon the Pharisee, 172; women follow, 173; Rabbis ascribe miracles of, to the devil, 176; relatives of, come to take him away, as out of his mind, 178; attacks the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, 179; poverty of, 184; storm on lake calmed by, 185; drives devils into the swine, 186; raises Jairus's daughter, 187; cures issue of blood, 187; Twelve sent out by, 188; applies lesson in Isaiah to himself, in synagogue, 189; driven out of Nazareth, 189; feeds five thou-

sand, 192; calms the lake, 194; deserted by many disciples at Capernaum, 196; in Phœnicia, 200; at Cæsarea Philippi, 203, 208; healing of deaf man, 203; feeding of four thousand, 205-206; blind man healed by, 206; opinions respecting, of the apostles, 209; transfiguration of, 212; healing of epileptic by, 215; returns to Galilee, 216; goes to Feast of Tabernacles, 216; pays Temple tax, 217; comprehensive charity of, 218, 222; Seventy sent out by, 222; the ten lepers cured by, 223; teaching of, in the Temple, during the feast, 224; assailed by the authorities, 225; threatened with stoning, 226; at Bethany, 229; dismisses woman guilty of adultery, 230; discourses of, 230 ff.; stoning again threatened, 231; parable of the Man who fell among Thieves, 232; of perseverance in prayer, 234; return of the Seventy, 234; cure of blind man by, 234; third attempt to stone, 238; raising of Lazarus by, 238 ff.; woman eighteen years bowed down, made whole by, 241; parable of the Great Feast, 244; of the Hundred Sheep, 247; of the Ten Pieces of Silver, 247; of the Prodigal Son, 248; of the Wise Steward, 250; of Dives and Lazarus, 252; of the Unjust Judge, 256; of the Publican and Pharisee, 257; judgment on divorce, 259; children invited by, 260; incident of the young nobleman, 260; parable of Labourers in the Vineyard, 264; Salome's request for her sons, 266; meets Zaccheus, 269; parable of Nobleman and Kingdom, 272; of the Talents, 272; at Bethany, 274; enters Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, 276; weeps over Jerusalem, 279; barren fig-tree, 282, 284; cleanses

- the Temple, 282; authorities challenge his action, 284; parable of the Two Sons, 285; of the Wicked Husbandmen, 286; attempt to arrest, 288; parable of Marriage Feast, 288; of Wedding Garment, 289; question of lawfulness of paying tribute, put to, 291; question about woman with seven husbands, put to, 293; on the Resurrection, 294; the sum of the Law, 296; denounces the scribes and Pharisees, 298-301; lament of, over Jerusalem, 301; praises gift of poor widow, 302; Greek pilgrims meet, 303; voice from heaven to, 304; predicts ruin of the Temple, 307; parable of the Ten Virgins, 308; proclaims himself the future judge of all men, 310; official counsel held against, 313; last Passover, 318; washes feet of apostles, 322; Last Supper, institution of, by, 327-329, 334; at Gethsemane, 335-338; arrest of, 339; trial of, before Caiaphas, 344-351; sentence of, ratified, 354; before Pilate, 357-375; before Herod Antipas, 363; condemned to the cross, 370; scourged, 370; mocked, 371; bears his cross, 379; lamented over by the women spectators, 381; details of Crucifixion of, 383 ff.; death of, 389; cause of death of, 392; burial of, 392-395; Resurrection of, 396 ff.; appearances of, 396-416; Ascension of, 417
- John the Baptist, 57-70; baptizes Jesus, 71; testimony to him after Temptation, 91; at Enon, 117; denounces Herodias and Herod, 74; imprisoned, 75; at Machaerus, 76; message to Jesus, 77; death, 80; a strict Jew, 130; Christ's question as to authority of, 285
- John, St., 93, 131 (see "Jesus")
- Joseph of Arimathea, 392
- Judea, description of, 3
- Judas the Galilean, 55
- Juttah, the birthplace of the Baptist (?), 8
- LAKE of Galilee, 94; fishing on, 94, 106; population, &c., round, 107; Christ preaching from boat on, 109, 130; storm on, 184; Jesus appears at, 411
- Last Supper, the, 326-329
- Law, veneration of the, 103
- Lazarus, raising of, 238 ff.
- Lepers, 137-138
- MAGDALA, 109
- Magi, visit of the, 27 ff.
- Magnificat*, the, 12
- Mary, the Virgin, 6; visitation of the Virgin, 7; and Elizabeth, meeting of, 12; journey to Bethlehem, 15; purification of, 22 ff.; flight of, to Egypt, 31; at the cross, 388; commended to care of St. John, 388
- Matthew, St., 143, 144
- Meals, usages at, 171
- Messiah, expectation of the, 26
- Miracles (see "Jesus") ascribed to the devil, 177
- NAIN, 167
- Nathanael, 96
- Nativity, Church of, 19
- Nazareth, 7, 38, 48, 50-57
- Nazarites, 52
- Nicodemus, 114, 392
- PALESTINE, sketch of, 1-3
- Parables (see "Jesus")
- Paralytic young man healed, 141
- Passover, the, 42, 113; the last, 317
- Peter, St., 94, 131; recognition of Christ as the Messiah by, 209; refuses to believe that Christ must suffer, 210; denial foretold, 325; takes place, 352-354
- Pharisees, the, 140, 145; Jesus assails, 197, 198; hypocrisy of some of the, 241, 243; Christ denounces the, 257
- Philip, 95, 96

- Pilate kills Galileans while sacrificing, 129, 355; "judgment-seat" of, 356; washes his hands, 369
 Pilgrimages to Jerusalem, 37
 Publicans, 143
 Phylacteries, 156, 300

 RABBIS, schools of the, 45; followed trades, 47; teaching of, 133, 139, 140

 SABBATH laws, 161, 163, 164, 246
 Sadducees assail Jesus, 292
 Salome's dance before Herod, 79
 Salome, mother of James and John, 95; request for her sons, 266
 Samaria, district of, 4, 119; city of, 126
 Sanhedrim in Christ's day, 332
 Schools in Christ's time, 35
 Scribes, the, 140
 Seasons, the, 105
 Sermon on the Mount, 150-159
 Seventy, the, 222, 234
 Shekel, the, 317
 Shepherds, appearance to the, 22
 Simeon, the aged, 23

 Simon of Cyrene, 380
 Simon the Pharisee, 171
 "South Country" in Christ's day, 116
 Spikenard, 315
 Synagogue, a Jewish, 35
 Syro-Phœnician woman, the, 200

 TABERNACLES, feast of, 221, 223
 Temple, the, 9, 40, 44; fall of, omens of, 312; tax, 217
 Thief, the penitent, and the impenitent, 386, 391
 Thomas, Jesus appears to, 410
 Tiberias, 33
 Transfiguration, the, 211-214
 Tribute paid to Rome by Jews, 291
 Twelve sent out, 190

 VINEYARDS, 105, 109

 WASHING the hands, importance of the rite of, 179, 197
 Water, cup of cold, 175

 ZACCHEUS, 269
 Zacharias at Temple, 10
 Zebedee, 95

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